“WOLVES GUARDING SHEEP”: HOW WOMEN POLICE IN LONDON AND CAPE TOWN BROKERED A DEAL TO PROTECT AND CONTROL WOMEN, 1914-1918

by

Katie Laird

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

The University of Utah

August 2016

The University of Utah Graduate School

STATEMENT OF THESIS APPROVAL

The thesis of **KATIE LAIRD**

has been approved by the following supervisory committee members:

NADJA DURBACH	, Chair	**11/19/15** Date Approved
JANET THEISS	, Member	**11/19/15** Date Approved
JAMES LEHNING	, Member	**11/19/15** Date Approved

and by **ISABEL MOREIRA** , Chair/Dean of

the Department/College/School of **HISTORY**

and by David B. Kieda, Dean of The Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

At the outbreak of World War I, women in Britain and South Africa formed groups of volunteer police women who patrolled the streets for indecent behavior, found homes for runaway children, and encouraged moral behavior of young women and girls. Despite their success at penetrating one of the most male-dominated professions, historians almost unanimously regard the movement as a betrayal of feminist values and goals. A careful reading of contemporary sources, however, reveals that the women police were attempting to work within the system to better the lives of females. With the movement headed by social purity feminists, a group now largely decried as antifeminist for their conservative and protectionist agendas, the approach was rather to protect women from the full impact of sexist laws, as opposed to actually changing those laws. These women saw the prevention of immoral behavior as not simply an imposition of conservative middle class values, but an expedient measure to protect females from a justice system whose very structure was designed to find them guilty. Feminists tend to discount social purists' impact on the modern feminist movement, but the transnational presence of the women police, as shown by this thesis' study of the Cape Town group, reminds scholars that the feminist movement has always been riddled with ambivalence and dilemmas. This thesis demonstrates that the social purity movement was a force to be reckoned with, and succeeded where suffragists had failed in opening the door to women in law enforcement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Much has been made in both popular and academic culture of the historic struggle for the female franchise. Through such extensive coverage, the vote has come to stand as perhaps the most recognized symbol of equality between the sexes. What is often ignored in discussions on the power to make laws, however, is the concomitant power to enforce them. Police officers act as agents of order by embodying the communal values expressed by the enfranchised. While the vote gave women a voice in the law, it did not lend them the power to bring those laws into fruition, and in most countries, they were and still are largely dependent on men to interpret and administer those laws. Feminists in London and Cape Town started agitating for women police over a century ago. Their arguments for change, however, were deeply rooted in gender essentialism, and this is perhaps one reason that scholars tend to avoid the topic, as the women who drove the police movement have a hard time fitting into "modern feminist paradigms."[1] There has been almost no scholarship on women police in Cape Town, and although the British movement has received some attention, no attempt has been made to compare the two, despite the fact that the Cape Town movement was formed, led, and developed by an English woman who traveled to South Africa for that express purpose. The unease surrounding the women who voluntarily participated in what many women interpreted as a "system of oppression" strikes at the heart of those internal divisions that haunted early

[1] Frances Heidensohn, *Women in Control?: Role of Women in Law Enforcement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 109.

twentieth-century feminists and continue, to some extent, into the present. That modern scholars still view such women as not "easily assimilated into feminist politics nor happily explained in the framework" is a testament to the chronic ambivalence Western women face while deciding how best to penetrate the power structure of a patriarchal police force.[2]

Almost all historians of the British female police movement – there being only one for the South African movement – agree that the first policewomen during WWI betrayed basic feminist principles by failing to mitigate the exploitation of women in the legal system. Philippa Levine calls it a "displacement of feminism," as the more women conformed to authoritarian, male roles, the less they sympathized with the women they had originally started out to protect.[3] Lucy Bland observes that those original objectives formed to protect women from the injustices of the law merely transformed into yet another form of control over women, only this time by women themselves.[4] Susan Kent and Harold Smith both argue that the policewomen contributed to the derailment of the larger feminist movement in Britain after the war.[5] Frances Heidensohn and Louise Jackson point out that it was precisely this brand of feminism that kept women police from becoming a valid force by relegating them to "soft policing."[6] John Carrier argues that the policewomen's concession to work only with women and children solidified the

---

[2] Heidensohn, 109.
[3] Philippa Levine. " 'Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should': Women Police in World War I," *The Journal of Modern History*, 66:1 (1994): 44-78, accessed February 3, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2124391.
[4] Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism & Sexual Morality, 1885-1914*, (New York: Penguin Group, 1995), 289.
[5] Susan Kent, "The Demise of British Feminism," in *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Harold Smith (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 76.
[6] Louise A. Jackson. "Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969," *The Historical Journal*, 46:3 (2003): 623-648, accessed February 8, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3133565.

narrow view of women's role in relation to family life that feminists should have been trying to eliminate.[7] Thus, despite gaining positions of ostensible power in the police force, British women still had to "reconcile the demand for equality with the assertion of sexual difference."[8] As Heidensohn noted, "Women in control can thus be compromised: they may participate in the oppressive 'protection' of their own sex, in the most literal sense adding insult to injury."[9]

Although their censure of the women's actions is almost unanimous, historians' interpretation of the police women's motives vary. Levine argues that class control was a driving factor, as the upper class patrols were more likely to believe that the working class actually needed regulation, especially in the areas of social and moral vice.[10] Sheila Jeffreys insists that these women merely wanted to prevent child sexual abuse, and putting women in all areas of law enforcement would help achieve that objective.[11] Joan Lock agrees with Levine: "[A]rmed with class, education confidence and courage, they [the policewomen] became quite successful in quelling the activities of the class of people who were meant to be quelled."[12] Angela Woollacott argues that the women police movement was a "direct response" to working-class women challenging the middle-class notion that "sexual chastity was integral to respectable femininity."[13] But Lucy Bland contends that class control had much less to do with the movement than the

---

[7] John Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, (London: Ashgate, 1988), 44.
[8] Smith, 68.
[9] Heidensohn, 28.
[10] Levine, 54.
[11] Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930*, (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1985), 70.
[12] Joan Lock, *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, (London: R. Hale, 1979), 26.
[13] Angela Woollacott. " 'Khaki Fever' and its Control: Gender, Class, Age and sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29:2 (1994): 325-347, accessed March 1, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/260893.

evolving view about female sexuality in Britain and women's role in philanthropy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[14] She argues that the evolution of female sexuality from the asexual, passive Victorian woman to the dutiful wife who enjoyed sexuality only within marriage had a significant impact on the policewomen's response to the morality laws and their role in enforcing them.[15] Bland stands out as one of the only historians who defends the policewomen and their work, and advocates a broader perspective of the women's "social purity feminism," which she argues was ultimately successful in "creating a narrative which legitimized the women police force based on moral grounds more than political."[16] Jill Radford rejects Bland's claim, arguing that the police movement provided a model for modern women to actively avoid, as it demonstrates the effects of submitting to a patriarchal system that inevitably turns women against each other.[17]

Most of these arguments fail to consider that the leaders of the police movement were all social purity activists, a fact that distinguished them from other feminist groups in important ways. The social purity movement sprang from the many reformist groups that characterized British society in the mid-nineteenth century. The various organizations of the movement all worked to eliminate vice from society, with much of their focus directed towards prostitution. By the turn of the century, they had shifted their efforts to the protection and education of children, fueled by fears of the white slave trade. Social purity groups have been critiqued for their tendency to punish in the name of protection and, in later years, advocating government interference to enforce personal

[14] Bland, 44.
[15] Ibid., 43.
[16] Bland, 48.
[17] Jill Radford, Jalma Hanmer, and Elizabeth Stanko, *Women, Policing, and Male Violence: International Perspectives,* (London: Routledge, 1989), 30.

religious beliefs. But the purists were also one of the most vocal groups opposing the sexual double standard, and demanded that males be held accountable for their sexual misconduct, both legally and socially. They were also instrumental in obtaining more autonomy for women in marriage and advocated sex education for youth. Paula Bartley has aptly described the group as a combination of "radicalism and conservative repression."[18] Whether they "subjected" themselves to the patriarchal system or not is debatable, and they did not succeed in effecting any lasting structural changes to the system that perpetuated the ills they protested. Far from betraying their sex, the patrols gained the trust of many young girls on the street by helping them avoid prosecution and the horrors of a criminal system that was designed to presume them guilty. Furthermore, by the middle of the war, the police were recruiting from all stratum of society, and a healthy majority of the women were from the working class, which contradicts historians' arguments that the movement was merely a power grab by the middle class. Working within the system or against it is a dilemma feminists have always faced. The social purists chose to work within it, embracing and exploiting the rhetorical paradigm of female essentialism that had shaped their social identity for decades. Most contemporary feminists reject such an approach, but in doing so, they ignore the impact of the police movements in both countries, and the success the movement achieved in opening the door for women in police work.

This thesis argues that historians' censure of the women police in their so-called subjection to the patriarchal model oversimplifies the complexity of the movement and discounts the cultural factors that created the social consciousness of these women. They

[18] Paula Bartley, *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England 1860-1914*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 23.

did not simply do men's bidding, but consistently and repeatedly emphasized their unique contribution to the police force, with much of their rhetoric focused on the crucial role of women on the streets and men's inadequacy to achieve the same results. For decades, feminists had been lobbying for women to be introduced into the police force, but failed to make any progress on the issue. By emphasizing their distinct role as women in police work, social purity feminists were able to make significant headway for women in a field that otherwise would likely have remained closed for decades. Scholars may choose to ignore this particular brand of feminism, but sociological studies have acknowledged that, contrary to the traditional notion of gender equality, acceptance of women police is more likely to be achieved by units that work mainly with women and children and gradually facilitates "integration into mainstream policing."[19]

Arguments to the contrary also risk discounting the agency women claimed for themselves within their community. Scholarship on the female suffrage movement has instead privileged a particularly vocal strand of early twentieth-century feminism and failed to recognize that this period witnessed the growth of many other versions of, and visions for, women's rights. An analysis of the identical movement in South Africa further illustrates this point, as it proves the viability and prevalence of this brand of feminism throughout the world, which is especially striking given the racial and political differences in the former colony. That the movement thrived in such a different setting from Britain speaks to the power of the message it embodied, and shows the movement

[19] Tim Prenzler and Georgina Sinclair. "The Status of Women Police Officers: An International Review," *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 41:2 (2013): 115-131, accessed July 7, 2015, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcj.2012.12.001.

as one that was powerful enough to "transcend th[o]se politically defined spaces"[20] in which twenty-first-century feminism tends to dwell. The movement's success in crossing borders and oceans and pervading nation states throughout the world reveals that this brand of feminism was a vibrant, transcontinental force that demands to be recognized.

[20] Sven Beckert in C.A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, "*AHR* Conversation: On Transnational History," *The American Historical Review*, 111:5 (2006): 1441-1464, accessed February 19, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10/1086/ahr.111.5.1441.

WOMEN POLICE IN BRITAIN

Early Women's Movements

Isolated groups of women pushing widely divergent social agendas sprang up all over England during the latter half of the 19th century. With the passing of the Contagious Disease Acts in 1864 and their expansion in 1869, women started to unite in greater numbers against the law that would cause perhaps more unrest and debate between the sexes than any other for the next fifty years. The Acts, as Walter Blease observed, essentially "permitted men to be as unchaste as they pleased," while "protect[ing] [them] from the consequences of their own indulgences."[21] With the spread of venereal disease a growing problem in the military, the Acts acknowledged the "necessity" of prostitution by establishing regulations for the providers. Any woman could be stopped on suspicion of soliciting and compelled to undergo an invasive exam, usually by male doctors or even sometimes by policemen. If found to be infected, she could be kept up to a year in a special hospital for prostitutes until cured. Although the Acts only applied to certain naval ports and army towns, it forced many to recognize how pervasive the sexual double standard had become. Thousands of women and young girls were affected, sometimes permanently, by the almost unlimited discretion given to the special "spy police," men who volunteered for the job of performing vaginal inspections of any female they

[21] Walter Lyon Blease, *The Emancipation of English Women*, (London: Constable & Co. Limited, 1913), 156-57.

chose.[22] Since the age of consent was only 13 at the time, girls who had barely reached puberty could still be inspected if police decided they were suspicious, and as the law required no witnesses, abuse was likely rampant.[23] In the words of a Chatham prostitute,

> It is *men*, only *men*, from the first to the last that we have to do with! To please a man I did wrong at first, then I was flung about from man to man. Men police lay hands on us. By men we are examined, handled, doctored. In the hospital it is a man again who makes prayer and reads the Bible for us. We are had up before magistrates who are men, and we never get out of the hands of men till we die![24]

This woman's antipathy towards the omnipresence of male authority in her life was not uncommon at the time, but rather embodies what many historians have since characterized as the "battle of the sexes," as women started to publicly chafe against the social and legal constraints imposed on her sex. Organizations such as the Ladies National Association for the Appeal of the Contagious Diseases Act (LNA) were further evidence of the first rumblings of female discontent, and the group quickly became one of the most influential groups working for the Act's repeal.[25] Hundreds of women joined the group, and over the next five years, Josephine Butler's group and others filed over 17,000 petitions with more than 2 million signatures protesting the Acts.[26] Their work caused a stir among lawmakers, as one remarked to Butler, "'We know how to manage any other opposition in the House or in the country, but this is very awkward for us, this

---

[22] Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 71-76; Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 89.
[23] Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 89.
[24] Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society,* 92.
[25] Bland, 98. (It is also worth mentioning that the two feminists formed the group only after learning that, as women, they were not welcome to participate in the official legislative group established by men to fight the law.)
[26] Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 90.

revolt of women.'"[27] Despite their tireless campaigning, it still took thirty years for the law to be repealed. But the women's experience in working against the CDA provoked public debate about the need for women to be involved not only in the making of laws, but also in enforcing them. Many activists believed that with the vote, such a law would never have passed; with women in the police force, it never would have been enforced.

With the repeal of the CDA by 1886, activists turned their attention to a new cause: child prostitution. Fear of the white slave trade, or the trafficking of young women for prostitution, peaked in 1885 when W.T. Stead published a series of articles in *The Pall Mall Gazette* that exposed the ease with which a man could "purchase" a girl for sexual purposes.[28] In *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon*, Stead explained how, for the purposes of the story, he himself had bought a 13-year-old girl from her parents who lived west of London. After the girl's virginity was confirmed by examination, she was sent to a brothel in London and drugged to wait for Stead's arrival.[29] Stead turned her over to the Salvation Army and presented the evidence of the escapade to the public.[30] After selling 1.5 million copies, the story created a "moral panic," throughout London and the rest of the country.[31] A month later, Parliament passed the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, which raised the age of consent for girls from 13 to 16, criminalized the keeping of brothels, and generally strengthened the laws against having sex with young girls. The law had an immediate effect. In the next nine months, the number of reports of

---

[27] J. Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade*, (London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1896), 11.
[28] W.T. Stead, "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon, I-III," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, July 6-10, 1885.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Stead was later prosecuted and convicted for his efforts, and died in the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. "The Eliza Armstrong Case: Being a Verbatim Report of the Proceedings at Bow Street," *Pall Mall Gazette Supplement*, Oct. 3, 1885, http://www.attackingthedevil.co.uk/pmg/tribute/armstrong/bow/bow1.php.
[31] Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 103.

sexual offenses against girls increased to sixty-five in nine months, compared to just five in the previous eighteen months.[32] Fear continued to escalate, however, when three female prostitutes were found gruesomely murdered in the streets of London three years later.[33]

Women's fear of the streets competed against their growing desire to be more present and involved in public life. As Judith Walkowitz has explained, "London became a dual setting for women, especially – one of growing perceived danger, certainly, but also one of opportunity and excitement."[34] Some women started to see this danger as not just the fault of the men who created it, but those women who gave into male demand for illegitimate sexual fulfillment. With this in mind, a group of social purity activists formed The National Vigilance Association (NVA) in August 1885 for the "enforcement and improvement of the laws for the repression of criminal vice and public immorality."[35] In other words, these "feminist vigilantes,"[36] as Bland calls them, took it upon themselves to make sure police enforced the Criminal Law Amendment Act, arguing that the streets would only be safe for all women if the prostitution was eradicated completely. Members of the NVA colluded with police to shut down brothels and clear the street of prostitutes, leaving many women homeless and more vulnerable to pimps and others who exploited them.[37]

Many of the women who helped establish the NVA were former members of the

---

[32] Ibid, 104.
[33] These were the victims of the unidentified serial killer, "Jack the Ripper."
[34] Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, 20.
[35] Gillian Fenwick, *The Literary Encyclopedia*, 1, "National Vigilance Association – banning of Zola's novels," The Literary Encyclopedia, February 2008, http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=5481.
[36] Bland, 95.
[37] Ibid.

LNA. Josephine Butler and others in the LNA had initially shown hesitant support for the Criminal Law Amendment, but were wary about how the law was to be enforced, fearing a repeat of the Contagious Diseases Act.[38] Butler eventually came to actively oppose the NVA's tactics, and sharply criticized her former colleagues for what she saw as a betrayal of the values they had spent so many years trying to promote.[39] Speaking to the NVA, Butler at one point wrote, " 'Have you protested against the arbitrary *arrest and examination* of women as 'unconstitutional and unjust' solely because they were inspected in the name of public health? Do such things become constitutional and just because they are done in the name of public morals?'" But the NVA still saw themselves as women's greatest champions. Not only were they helping prostitutes turn from a life of evil, but by so doing they were perhaps even saving their lives and also making the streets safer for all women. This was also likely a strategic decision, with activists predicting that they would meet with better success if they tried to control women instead of men. It was also part of a longer history of middle-class policing of working-class morality. As Bland has argued, middle-class women's philanthropy was "about the surveillance of, and possible co-operation with, the working-class woman."[40] Middle-class women were expected to visit the poor and distribute goods, but these visits were often used as opportunities to monitor the moral habits of the poor, ostensibly in an effort to reform them.[41] Elizabeth Langland observes that working class women quickly learned to present themselves in an adequately obsequious manner to actually receive what their

[38] Bland, 98.
[39] As cited in Bland, 102.
[40] Bland, 112.
[41] Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, (Cornell University Press, 1995), 56.

benevolent visitors had to give.[42] Alison Twells suggests that this system of visiting the homes of the poor made middle-class women important agents in the social order, as their "private and domestic skills played a crucial role in the construction of a class culture in which the domestic was seen as a crucial site of social reform."[43] As a result of this public display of moral values and domestic ideology, middle-class women succeeded in conflating their class with automatic "goodness in a 'true woman.'"[44] Since morality was connected to domestic order, which in turn was crucial to social order, middle-class women came to be seen as both the guardians and source of social stability.[45] So it should have come as no surprise to see middle-class women shift this type of "work" from their homes to the streets, in keeping with the increased flow of working-class women to urban centers in the years leading up to and during WWI. In fact, it would have been more unusual for the middle class to cease their vigilance over the group of women they had already spent generations patrolling. This policy emerged not only out of gendered debates about women's social role, but broader class tensions around morality and surveillance.

Those tensions manifested themselves regularly among social purity activists. For instance, there were some women within the NVA who grew uncomfortable with the zealous approach their leaders took in pursuing prostitutes, and eventually broke off to form the Personal Rights Association, whose goals were similar, but attempted to avoid repressing the individual's rights while still campaigning for cleaner streets. The feeling

---

[42] Ibid.
[43] Alison Twells, "A Christian and Civilised Land': The British Middle Class and the Civilising Mission, 1820-42," in *Gender, Civic Culture & Consumerism*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 51.
[44] Langland, 58.
[45] Ibid, 56.

between the two groups was anything but friendly, and the LNA frequently butted heads with both. Meanwhile, the suffragists had split and were trying to distance themselves from the highly unpopular suffragette movement, whose impatience at the incremental progress towards the vote had exploded into acts of violence and vandalism. With the outbreak of war, both groups laid down their arms in the interests of national unity for the war effort. The social purists, however, saw new opportunities with the arrival of wartime conditions.

The Formation of the Women Police

In June 1914, Nina Boyle, a former suffragette, petitioned the Home Secretary to allow for the organization of a female volunteer police force. Her main objectives for the volunteers were 1) to motivate female victims to report sexual and physical abuse; 2) to investigate cases of abortion and infanticide; 3) to supervise female prisoners, particularly at night; and 4) to protect women from male police abuse.[46] It is indicative of the ambiguous state of the women's objectives that Boyle conflated cases of female criminals with those of female victims. The London police commissioner, Sir Edward Henry, denied the petition. This was likely due to Boyle's involvement with the suffragettes.[47] Two months later, a small group of women formed to take it upon themselves to monitor the situation at London's main train stations where increasing numbers of refugees from the war had started to pour in.[48] Most of these refugees were women and children, spoke no English, and had no place to go. The group was spearheaded by Margaret Damer

[46] Radford, Hanmer, and Stanko, 26.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties,1921: Testimony of Margaret Damer Dawson and Mary Allen, March 5, 1920, 25-35. London School of Economics, Women's Library (hereafter LSE): 3AMS/B/12/04.

Dawson, a middle-aged, middle-class activist who had devoted years to fighting the white slave trade in England and on the continent. She and the other women attempted to direct the refugees to temporary housing and other organizations that could help with relocation for fear that these vulnerable women might be seduced or tricked into prostitution. After a few days of this volunteer work, Dawson spotted a woman who showed up at the station three different times throughout the day, each time wearing a different outfit and once with an entirely different hair color.[49] Dawson suspected the woman of being a trafficker, sent to lure vulnerable women and girls to work in brothels.[50] She realized that her group could be much more effective in protecting the refugees if they had state authority and some sort of uniform to indicate their official status. She arranged a meeting with Henry to discuss the idea and learned about Boyle's previous attempt to form a similar group. Although she barely knew Boyle, Dawson persuaded Henry to allow the two women to form the Women Police Volunteers together, with Dawson at the head and Boyle as second in command.[51] Dawson designed a simple uniform for the women to wear, and for the first three months, the women continued to spend the majority of their time at major train stations in London protecting refugees from pimps and other predators, notably a much narrower mission than Boyle's wide-ranging agenda.[52]

Although Henry had allowed the women to form, they still had no official power: they had no authority to arrest, and they certainly carried no weapons. Their only power resided in the Home Office's consent to let them continue on with their work without

[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

dispersing them. Their quasi-official status invoked by their uniforms still provoked concern by some constables, however, and it became clear that the government still feared the idea of suffragettes wielding even a modicum of authority, with some likening their arrival to a "militant invasion."[53] Very soon after the formation of the group, a "rapid deradicalization" took place, with all members required to swear off any political associations.[54] It is also telling that Dawson was selected as the group's leader, not Boyle. This established a precedent of social purity activists taking the lead over suffragettes. Even several years after the war, Police Commissioner Nevil Macready, Henry's replacement in 1918, explained that he had gone to great lengths to make sure that no woman police volunteer had had any involvement with the militant suffragettes, for otherwise, the movement never would have "run properly."[55] This evidence makes clear that the founders of the women police did not come into the movement with the same experience or devotion to women's political rights as those women who had campaigned in the various suffragist movements. Their feminism was rather shaped by the moral issues that had taken root in the 1880s and a personal rights agenda that did not necessarily put the vote first and foremost in relation to questions of citizenship.

The same applies to the second group of women who were in the midst of forming what they saw as a solution to a different, but related problem: khaki fever. The term "khaki fever" was coined early on in the war as large numbers of soldiers started to congregate in various towns throughout England to prepare for deployment.[56] Communities watched with growing alarm as droves of young women flocked to the cities, where many feared

[53] Levine, 60.
[54] Ibid, 47.
[55] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, 1921: Testimony of General Sir Nevil Macready, March 4, 1920, 10-16.LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[56] Woollacott, "Khaki Fever," 326.

that inappropriate sexual behavior went unchecked. Instead of viewing women as victims of male exploitation through white slavery, many perceived these women as "blatant, aggressive and overt in their harassment of soldiers."[57] Articles in *The Times* suggest that this problem did not die down after the first flush of excitement, but continued throughout the war. For instance, in a 1917 report of criminal cases, the title of the article, "More Young Women before the Magistrates,"[58] implies that the issue was an ongoing problem, as opposed to an isolated incident. A 25-year-old milliner named Ann Newman was accused of "accosting" soldiers on the street, and it was rumored that she had been engaged in such "work" for over a decade.[59] A 23-year-old munition worker and a 19-year-old wrapper joined Newman in pleading guilty to the crime of "accosting" soldiers, and another 21-year-old woman was accused of "acting in a disgusting manner."[60] Even near the end of the war, community leaders continued to struggle with similar problems. A constable wrote in *The Daily Express* on 13th Feb 1918, that moral conditions in his district were "worse than I ever have ever known." He reported 65 arrests of girls between ages 15-20 in the past two weeks. Charges ranged from indecency to disorderly behavior.[61]

This treatment of women and girls in the press was a striking divergence from the perception of females as the victims that W.T. Stead and others had instigated 30 years earlier. The troubling paradox of women as aggressors or victims in the sexual arena became a divisive sticking point for feminists, as both viewpoints required vastly different approaches for resolution of the problem, but also carried different implications

---

[57] Ibid.
[58] "More Young Women before the Magistrates," *The London Times*, March 6, 1917.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] *The Daily Express*, February 13, 1918.

for the sex as well. For the social purity activists, this was a particularly troublesome problem, for their brand of feminism relied on the premise that women possessed a superior moral authority by virtue of their sex, and yet, that authority was undermined by the rampant immorality of young girls and women on the streets. One group of social purity activists chose to face the problem by acknowledging both sides of the issue and tackling it head on. Meeting almost daily, and after much "anxious deliberation," the National Council of Women, a group devoted to women's labor issues, decided to form the Women Patrols, who would supervise "open spaces" such as parks and other common areas.[62] "They were to be neither detectives nor rescue workers, though their mission partook of the nature of both; they were to be more like experimental policewomen."[63] The group found 26 "organisers" to train the volunteers, for they realized that what they were doing was "quite new pioneer work," as they aimed to " 'safeguard our girls from the results of natural excitement produced by the abnormal conditions now prevailing.'"[64]

It is notable that both the Women Patrols and the Women Police Service had to bend a traditional feminine role in order to control the evolving sexual identity of British women, "which in the absence of restraining influences are apt in war time to be lowered and to bring British womanhood into disrepute."[65] Although the women police volunteers and the woman patrols had similar objectives, they soon became rivals, particularly after the split over Grantham.

---

[62] National Council of Women, *Women Police in Great Britain: England* (High Wycombe: Harrison & Sons, 1924), LSE: GB 106 AMS/B/12.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Radford, Hanmer, and Stanko, 30.
[65] Home Office Circular No. 96/1944: "Policewomen." March 30, 1944, LSE: Box 4, 3/AMS/B/12/04.

The Split over Grantham

The Grantham split is regarded by historians as the first major betrayal of feminist objectives by Dawson's group of women police volunteers. A close examination of the events, however, suggests a more favorable outcome for women than most historians have acknowledged and a much more complicated dilemma for Dawson. By November 1914, Grantham, a small town of 20,000 residents, had become the temporary gathering place for over 25,000 military personnel. There soon arose so many problems borne from soldiers' illicit liaisons with the locals that the military staff captain, who happened to be Dawson's brother-in-law, contacted her with a plea for several women police to help keep order.[66] Very soon after Dawson and two other volunteers arrived, the general issued what Dawson called "an unhappy order."[67] Under the power of The Defense of the Realm Act, the general proclaimed that all women and girls must be in doors from the hours of 8 pm–7 am.[68] The army then asked Dawson and her women to enforce the curfew. Dawson made the decision to comply, although, as she later recounted, she and her colleagues were "very much criticized" for enforcing such a blatantly unjust law against their own sex.[69] The women were given permission to enter the homes of anyone within a six-mile radius of the center of the post office and Belton Park Camp, and Dawson admitted to "turn[ing] out of these houses hundreds of soldiers and girls."[70] Other women, including her partner Nina Boyle, were outraged at what they saw as a betrayal of the basic tenets women police were supposed to support. What was the use,

[66] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ. 1921: Testimony of Margaret Damer Dawson and Mary Allen, March 5, 1920, 25-35. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

they lamented, of having women in law enforcement if those women enforced sexist laws? But Dawson maintained the practicability, if not the moral high road, of her position, and never regretted her decision. On the contrary, she believed that she and the other women police would be more useful working within the law's strictures than launching an impotent protest from the margins.[71] What many historians neglect to mention is that the curfew was indeed repealed within a month of the women's arrival. Dawson claims this was a result of hers and her colleagues' work, as they were able to convince authorities that the law merely forced indecency to take place behind closed doors, making it that much harder to control.[72] Indeed, the women police were so successful at "cleaning the place up,"[73] that they were asked to stay even after the curfew was rescinded, and in 1915, the town hired Mrs. Edith Smith, the first female constable in the country with full powers of arrest, although the validity of her status was debated, since the Police Act at the time did not yet allow for women to be made constables.[74]

Despite this success, Nina Boyle demanded that Dawson resign her position for having "gone against women's interests."[75] Instead, Dawson appealed to the 50 other volunteers, and all but one voted to keep Dawson as head of the group.[76] Boyle resigned her position instead, while Dawson and her growing corps forged ahead with a new name – the Women Police Service. Word spread of their success in Grantham, and police

---

[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Lady Nott-Bower, March 8, 1920, LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04, 42-46.
[74] Alan Travis, "First female PC wins Theresa May's acclaim and apology," *The Guardian*, December 1, 2015, accessed February 14, 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/dec/02/first-female-pc-wins-theresa-mays-acclaim-and-apology.
[75] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ. 1921: Testimony of Margaret Damer Dawson and Mary Allen, March 5, 1920, p. 25-35. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[76] Ibid.

departments around the country started to call for their help. By 1916, the Women Police Service had been recruited to monitor female workers at the munition factories full-time. This was a boon for the group, as the Home Office agreed to pay each woman 25 shillings a week for their work.[77] Up until this time, they had relied solely on donations, which restricted both the number and type of woman who could join, as most needed to have some source of private income to devote so many hours of unpaid work.[78] Given the nature of their supervisory roles, as well as the class division between the two groups – most of the munition workers drew from the working class, and almost all of the police volunteers early on in the war came from the middle class – there was bound to be some resentment. Woollacott points out that the police women's authority was still based on "the social construction of genteel femininity," which naturally produced some antipathy.[79]

The criteria used to recruit female police signified the division between them and the women they patrolled. An article in the *Times* called for "educated" and "strong" women to join their ranks.[80] The emphasis on education was an overt discouragement to women of the working class to refrain from applying, although the term "strong," seems to suggest a working-class influence. Since men's sexual behavior was not an issue, this same problem did not exist among the policemen, which was made up of mostly working-class men. It became increasingly difficult to find "the right stamp of character"

[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Angela Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1994),164.
[80] *The London Times*, August 1917.

for the female police's unique role as the war progressed, however.[81] By 1918, the *Times* was reporting that, on average, only 10 women in 100 at the training school in Bristol founded by Dawson were found "suitable for the task."[82] The women were required to undergo vigorous training in an extensive array of subjects, including the homes and social conditions of the working class.[83] Although many of the group's leaders later claimed that age, experience, and personality were all much more important factors than class, the behavior of young working-class women, particularly in relation to the young working-class policemen, was a concern.[84]

Finding enough educated women to fill the positions was difficult, given the low pay. By 1920, Dawson reported that of all the women they had trained thus far, there were 130 nurses, 75 teachers, 34 clerks, 59 from business, 28 munition workers, 13 shop assistants, 28 dressmakers, 9 land-workers, 10 motor-drivers, 6 doctors or chemist assistants, and 110 from domestic service.[85] These numbers undermine the arguments offered by Levine, Lock, and Woollacott, who contend that class was the driving force behind the women patrol movements. Although class clearly played its part in the women's desire to maintain the middle class standard of sexual morality, the fact that almost half of the recruits represented in this report were from the working class makes it

---

[81] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of General Sir Nevil Macready, March 4, 1920, p. 10-16. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.

[82] "Training Policewomen," *The London Times*, February 20, 1918.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Miss D.O.G. Peto, OBE, Mrs. R. Young, and Miss Joseph on behalf of the Bristol Branch Federated Training Schools for Policewomen and Patrols, March 7, 1920, p. 25-35.LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04. "The younger ones do not, I think, do very well if taken from an uneducated class. It is very hard for them to go into the force with men of the same standing as themselves, and yet maintain discipline and the proper fellowship and attitude towards the men when they are quite young and of exactly the same social standing. It is easier for a woman of a somewhat different class to do it, and I think the men in many cases feel that themselves."

[85] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Margaret Damer Dawson and Mary Allen, March 5, 1920, p. 25-35. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.

unlikely that the middle class was merely attempting to control working-class behavior.

Women Patrols

As the Women Police Volunteers were working in the munitions factories, the Women Patrols were quietly making a name for themselves with the Metropolitan Police Force. In 1916, due to Henry's influence, The Police Factories Miscellaneous Act was passed, which enabled payment for patrol work to be taken out of the police fund. Henry then selected 30 of these women to become special patrols, working full-time, earning wages, and wearing armbands to distinguish themselves from regular volunteers. They were tasked with patrolling Hyde Park, ice cream shops, hotels, cinemas, and dancing halls – all spaces of youthful heterosexual interactions, taking upon themselves the role of "street chaperones…standing for healthy recreation and self-control."[86] The patrols were united from the beginning in their efforts to regulate public morality, and by 1918, there were 2,338 working in 72 locations throughout England and Wales.[87] The patrols broke up couples who were demonstrating unseemly behavior in public, and followed young women home who they suspected of being prostitutes. Henry also hired eight patrols to investigate and report to him on inappropriate conduct at cinemas in the Metropolitan district. The patrols made sure that no adults were admitted to children's shows, as one woman reported that she and her partner discovered that young women who attended cinemas often unwittingly had their seats changed in the darkened room to be placed by soldiers and sailors, fueling fears that cinema workers were facilitating child abuse.[88]

[86] Bristol Training School for Women Patrols and Police: Annual Report for the year ending 31st August, 1918. LSE: GB 106 AMS/4/10/3.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Miss H.M. Kempthorne, March 7, 1920, p. 35-38. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.

Neither the Women Police Volunteers nor the Women Patrols had the power to arrest during the war, nor did they carry any sort of weapon. They argued that their success at detaining and preventing immoral behavior arose from the natural moral authority of women. The *Times*, on the other hand, argued that the women's influence lay more in their mere presence than anything they actually did. "[T]he consciousness that decent, well-bred women are out in all weathers taking thought for [their] welfare" should motivate evil doers to better behavior.[89] *The Times* also credits the policewomen for helping to rid the streets of those women who "prey on the sons of English mothers."[90] This account is a perfect example of the dual identity women claimed in public life – the mother is portrayed as a victim, but the perpetrator is also a woman, and both roles are derived from their sexual relationships with men.

Although they refrained from going to such lengths as *The Times* by overestimating their moral influence, patrols claimed that women did seem to have more of an effect in the streets than men did:

> "It is strange, but it is true, that these couples behaving badly very much more dislike being found behaving badly by a woman than by a man. A man seems much more ashamed of being found in difficult positions by a woman and much more ready to pull up."[91]

Their moral influence, however, did not keep most women from wanting powers of arrest. They soon started to chafe at having to rely on men to make arrests, and pointed out how their mode of dealing with troublemakers was often more intuitive and conciliatory than men's. In one account, for instance, a policewoman described having

---

[89] "Unobtrusive Good Work," *The London Times*, April 17, 1917.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Miss M.H. Cowlin, director of the Liverpool and District Women Patrols' Centre and Training School for Women Police. March 7, 1920, p. 40-43. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.

come across two women fighting in the streets. She succeeded in separating the women and was leading away the aggressor with "no fuss," when a young policeman arrived and immediately arrested the woman, which riled her up again and made it almost impossible for the officer to get her to the station.[92]

As this and other examples demonstrate, the women police and patrols were generally successful at what they did. It is likely that any woman who would dedicate herself to work that was "often dull and monotonous, and always fatiguing in the extreme"[93] without pay was already driven, but many believed that their success was due to inherent feminine traits that men simply did not possess. Feminist historians have rejected this, arguing that any gender essentialist argument is both faulty and ultimately damaging to equality between the sexes. The very moral purity that policewomen used to support their work, others saw as exactly the reason they should not be allowed to deal with crimes of such a sordid nature. In fact, the more women pressed to be involved in matters of sexual deviance, the more they brought into question their motives and the morality they laid claim to. One man claimed that such women must "suffer from a sort of moral obliquity,"[94] and another proclaimed that it must be harmful to a woman's mind to constantly be preoccupied with sexual offences.[95] As was the case with the Contagious Diseases Acts, it was precisely the protection of women's sexual morality that gave these women the right to speak and act in public to safeguard other women. But the act of speaking openly about sexuality paradoxically compromised their own claims to be moral

[92] Ibid.
[93] National Council of Women, *Women Police in Great Britain: England* (High Wycombe: Harrison & Sons, 1924), LSE: GB 106 AMS/B/12.
[94] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Mr. Frederick Mead, Metropolitan Police Magistrate. March 8, 1920, p. 44-48. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[95] Notes of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene: Deputation to Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Scotland, 1929: Testimony of Miss Edith Tancred, on behalf of NCW of Great Britain. LSE: Box 076, 3AMS/B/12/01-04.

guardians.

As always, the morality of women brought up the closely related issue of the role their bodies played in public. Many expressed concern over the women's physical safety, particularly in such dangerous work as raiding brothels armed with nothing but "their hatpins."[96] But the women themselves seemed remarkably unconcerned with the dangers they faced. In their training, many were taught jujitsu, and reported incidents that justified their full confidence in not only being able to fend for themselves, but control unruly civilians as well. One patrol recounted how she came across a drunken man who kept bothering a woman and "ju-jitsued him" until a constable could be found to make an arrest.[97] Another policewoman claimed that she could easily get a man down and sit on him, "keep[ing] him in agony" until a constable arrived to take him away.[98] Far from worrying about the physical risks women incurred patrolling the streets, one patrol leader reported that the physical effect on the volunteers, especially those who had led most of their lives indoors, was "miraculous."[99] Their stamina quickly improved, and they were soon obliged to alter uniforms as the women's "physique expanded" as a result of all the open air exercise.[100]

Still, many remained unconvinced, as one man wrote in the *The Evening Star:* "What is the evidence, and where does it come from, of the usefulness of female constables? Usefulness for what? The function of the police constable is physical force:

---

[96] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Mr. Frederick Mead, Metropolitan Police Magistrate. March 8, 1920, p. 44-48. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[97] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Miss H.M. Kempthorne, March 7, 1920, p. 35-38. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[98]Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Mrs. Young, March 7, 1920, p. 33-35. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[99] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Margaret Damer Dawson and Mary Allen, March 5, 1920, p. 25-35. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[100] Ibid.

he is there to keep order by restraining disorderly persons; to protect the bodies and property of his Majesty's lieges by arresting actual or potential criminals; above all by the physical bulk of his presence to deter the evil-minded. For those duties the only requisites are strength and courage. Is it pretended that female constables have enough brute force or pluck to justify their appointment? … The few women police I have seen wandering aimlessly about Hyde Park look like a school-marm and a nursery governess rolled into one, and dressed in clumsy boots and such terrible gloves!"[101]

Attacking a woman's looks to undermine her professional legitimacy continues to be a common pastime in public dialogue, but it would have especially resonated with this audience, who was already used to the endless critiques leveled at the suffragists' clothing choices and masculine appearance. This reveals one of the core pillars upon which the gender hierarchy has always relied – that women are valued only as much as they are sexually desirable to men. Thus, if one can discredit a woman's sexual viability, her credibility in every aspect of her life is immediately invalidated. But of course, the dilemma remains that if the police women had dressed more fashionably, their femininity, though no longer under suspicion, would then become the reason they could not perform a man's job. The op-ed writer effectively illustrates this vicious cycle women face by first equating their femininity – always through their bodies – with weakness, thus disqualifying them from the work, and then accusing them of not being feminine enough – always through their lack of sexual appeal – revealing a common understanding with his readers that this will also be taken as an automatic shortcoming, even for a job that has nothing to do with feminine attire.

The women patrols were of course well aware of this uniquely female trap and

[101] A.A.B., "More Male Police Wanted. Not Enough Detectives," *The Evening Star*, Dec 14, 1925.

went to great lengths to avoid comparing themselves to men. They repeatedly proved their ability to connect better with women and children, to develop relationships with those they patrolled, and that physical force was not actually necessary as often as men claimed it was. The women claimed that all of these advantages were a direct result of their sex, and furthermore, women were far less vulnerable to corruption when it came to patrolling prostitution and working with young girls. Multiple reports record young women approaching women police with confessions of "absolute orgies" with the policemen.[102] "The moment you have more policewomen working you will eliminate that danger," one advocate argued.[103] Those policemen who did not succumb to prostitutes were often afraid to handle their cases, for fear of charges being made against them that they had. Macready testified to the Home Office after the war that, had he remained at Scotland Yard, he would have handed over all cases of immorality and prostitution to the women police, for it was too difficult to "eradicate the sex instinct" in men.[104]

William Hall, a Metropolitan Police Magistrate, remarked on the uncertainty that always accompanied the arrest of a prostitute by a policeman, because one "never quite knows on what ground" the arrest had been made.[105] "When one knows how many prostitutes there are in the streets and how comparatively few are arrested, one is a little anxious as to why it should always be a particular woman that is arrested," he said, implying a concerning level of inappropriate personal involvement with the prostitutes by

[102] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Lady Nott-Bower, March 8, 1920, p. 42-46. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of General Sir Nevil Macready, March 4, 1920, p. 10-16.LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[105] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Mr. William Clarke Hall, Metropolitan Magistrate, March 7, 1920, p. 56-66. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.

the policemen.[106] With women taking over that aspect of police work, he argued, that would no longer be a problem.[107] For instance, Hall reported that he was once forced to keep two young girls in a cell overnight, and neither had parents or family close at hand. The girls were ill and the prison provided only one thin blanket for each of them in the middle of winter. One of the girls almost died during the night.[108] If he had had a woman patrol on hand, Hall could have had her escort the girl through the streets to find an appropriate lodging for the night. But Hall mistrusted policemen to the degree that he thought it better for the girls to stay in prison than have one of the officers accompany them alone in the streets.[109] Social purity feminists' concerns regarding the male threat to female morality were thus corroborated by a man. Madame Avril de Sainte-Croix, the Josephine Butler of France, argued that to expect men to arrest and prosecute the tempting women who made it their profession to seduce men "would be to disregard the laws which govern humanity."[110] This was a typical argument social purity feminism used, as one of their central concerns revolved around male morality and the many social vices it regularly created.

Along with women's moral superiority, social purity feminists emphasized the strong bond females had with one another, and this played a significant role in their arguments for putting women on the street. They claimed that women could "see through" other women's statements much more easily than men could. One policewoman claimed that, "[A]s long as [women] are sure of sympathy they would much rather have a

---

[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] League of Nations, Traffic in Women and Children Committee: The Employment of Women in the Police. March 2, 1927: Geneva. Speech submitted by Madame Avril de Sainte Croix. p. 3. LSE: NVA Box 4, FL380.

woman. The only one who does not want it is the woman who thinks she can deceive the men."[111] In cases of domestic abuse or sexual assault, the advocates argued, categorically preferred speaking to women during investigations. A patrol in Bristol told of two 12-year-old girls who approached her on the street and relayed "a most sordid account" of having been molested by a man. They told the patrol that they were too frightened to tell their mothers, but knew they could tell the "police ladies."[112] This same patrol was convinced that four factory girls who told her about having seen a drunk girl going off into a corner with a strange man would never have told a man about what they had seen. "[I]t is such a relief to women to be able to tell women that these things happen, and many of them will not go straight to a man."[113] Many accounts describe situations where women succeeded in gathering information from a female after the policeman failed. One woman reported that she was asked by policemen to try to speak to a woman who they suspected had been a victim of assault. They had tried repeatedly to get her to speak, but at last concluded that she was mentally deficient when they failed to get any intelligible word from her. "I was able to get all the information that was wanted in that case," the policewoman later reported.[114] Policewomen "can help these unfortunate women to clothe indecent acts in decent words which they cannot do themselves."[115]

But having women in the police force was not just a matter of easing communication between police and civilians. It was a crucial step for victims to obtain justice in a criminal system that was deeply biased against females in relation to sexual

[111] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Lady Nott-Bower, March 8, 1920, p. 42-46. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[112] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Mrs. Young, March 7, 1920, p. 33-35. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.

crimes. It was extremely difficult for a woman to obtain a conviction of rape against her attacker. Her character, past actions, and appearance had to be completely unassailable, as she had the burden to prove that she had put up a sufficient struggle and had not encouraged the man's advances in any way.[116] Even girls ages 12-16 entered court under the rebuttable presumption that they had seduced their attacker unless there was clear evidence of severe physical abuse.[117] For child victims, the degree of trauma they suffered was discounted, due to their assumed lack of understanding about anything of a sexual nature.[118] This, combined with a strong distrust of children's testimony, made it almost impossible for jurists to hear from the actual victim, making conviction difficult.[119] Suffragists and other feminist groups wanted to change these laws, but the patrols believed that the most practical way of dealing with the present reality was to prevent women and girls from having to go to court in the first place. Preventive measures are almost always impossible to quantify, especially in areas of social behavior. Accounts show that while the women did vigorously enforce many of these discriminatory laws, they simultaneously facilitated the escape of countless girls from becoming victims to sexual assaults as well as the criminal justice system. As one patrol testified, troubled girls came to them "of their own accord in large numbers" because they came to realize that the women police were "out to help them rather than to run them into prison."[120]

Spending even one night in prison could be traumatic for a young girl, as they

---

[116] Carolyn Conley, *The Unwritten Law: Criminal Justice in Victorian Kent* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 114.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid, 122.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.

were monitored in most locations by men, with only some jails using a matron to help with the female prisoners. One woman reported that during her training with the patrols in a London police station, she witnessed a girl "half carried half dragged up the stairs, shrieking and struggling" by a young policeman, who then threw the girl in a cell nearby, and "stood chaffing her through the bars for some considerable time."[121] The experience haunted her for years afterwards, and convinced her that men should never be responsible for women in custody.

Since only solicitation for prostitution was illegal, the arrests made connected to the crime were overwhelmingly lopsided. For instance, from 1914 through the first eight months of 1916, over 16,000 women were arrested for solicitation, with 13,000 being fined or bound over. In the same time period, not one man was arrested.[122] Women found that they could be arrested without engaging in any illegal behavior. As one woman complained,

> A man will accost a girl on the street, and if she is foolish enough to engage in conversation with him, say, 'Do as I wish, and come with me, or I will report you for soliciting.' On account of the difficulty of getting witnesses to such conversations, the man's word will be taken against the girl's if the case goes to court…Thus innocent, or wavering, girls are caught, -- girls who choose the dire alternative of wrongdoing rather than a public prosecution as a street-walker.[123]

The extreme difficulty of winning such a case in court discouraged most women from pursuing the matter. In fact, young women were advised to not attempt to defend themselves under such conditions.[124] The director of the Liverpool Women's Patrols commented that convictions of women for cases such as drunkenness and immorality for

---

[121] "Personal experience of woman in Bow Street Police Station," Employment of Women Police I 1885-1925, Box 76 Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, LSE: 3AMs/B/12/01.
[122] "Why We Should not Advocate Severe Measures for the Punishment of Street Solicitation," Katharine C. Bushnell, M.D. (1919). LSE: Box 122, 3AMS/D/41.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.

women was futile: "[W]e have stood between young people and the police courts, and still wish to do that."[125]

Suffragists' almost unanimous decision to put a stop to their campaign for the vote during the war meant that for at least the immediate future, there was no hope in changing these laws or electing officials who could make new ones. Feminist outcry against the injustice of the laws had been heard for decades, but had made very little headway in overturning them. The patrols, on the other hand, succeeded in securing a position within the male establishment wherein they could prevent some women from having to undergo a traumatic procedure whose effects could often follow them for the rest of their life.

This preventive role that the patrols assumed did complicate their relationship with the rest of the police force. Some women felt that if they were incorporated fully with the power to arrest, as some women started to advocate, their influence on the streets would be compromised. The director of the Liverpool and District Women's Patrol Centre, M.H. Cowlin, for instance, stated that once sworn in as constables, the regulations of the police corps would significantly diminish the effect and scope of the women's work.[126] Others worried that their rapport with girls and young women on the streets would suffer once they knew that the police women could arrest them. By the end of the war, however, the majority of women in both groups wanted their positions to become permanent, with full powers of arrest with all the authority granted to male constables. Despite their success in Grantham and other cities, the Women Police

[125] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Miss M.H. Cowlin, director of the Liverpool and District Women Patrols' Centre and Training School for Women Police. March 7, 1920, p. 40-43. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[126] Ibid.

Volunteers had run afoul of the Metropolitan Police somewhere along the way. Macready complained that Dawson's group was a "rogue operation" that caused confusion and undermined legitimate police authority in the city.[127] Instead, the thirty special patrols that Henry had hired in 1916 became the foundation for the Women Police Patrols, employed full-time by the London Metropolitan Police after the war. Although Dawson wanted her group to be permanent and fully recognized by the government, her experience during the war had convinced her that a completely separate department should be formed for women police officers.[128] She argued that women's police work required those traits that only women possessed, and diverged so widely from the traditional definition of police work, that to try to combine the two forces would create too many conflicts. Women's work, she argued, required "a difference of temperament, of character, of physique, and of everything… It is much more subtle work than ordinary male police work."[129] She saw a separate department as the solution to the squabbles about women's pay, fueled by the constant comparisons between women's lack of physical risk compared to that of the men. "The women are paid differently, taught differently, and organized differently, and I think they do different work," she said.[130] As seems to characterize all feminist dilemmas, however, Mary Allen, Dawson's first in command and one of the original women at Grantham, was not free from the desire to show a certain degree of sameness with the men. Though she claimed not to emulate them in work, she required that her women appear not too feminine, calling it

[127] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of General Sir Nevil Macready, March 4, 1920, p. 10-16. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[128] Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Margaret Damer Dawson and Mary Allen, March 5, 1920, p. 25-35. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.

"disgraceful" when policewomen wore "kiss curls" peeking out of their caps and lipstick while on patrol. "Women police should be disciplined in exactly the same way as men. Hair should be short and completely out of sight when on duty," she stated.[131]

Dawson's proposal failed to ignite interest in anyone other than her own group. Without the impetus of the war or funding from the state, the Women Police Volunteers eventually faded in numbers and force, exacerbated by Dawson's untimely death in 1920. The Women Police Patrols continued to flourish, however, and although they faced cuts in funding and recruits from year to year, women continued to be an official part of the British police force at various levels from that point on, although it was not until 1973 that all official forms of discrimination were ended by legislation. As of 2014, more than one in four of all British police were women. Statistics show a significant increase in numbers of female officers over the past decade, but they are still significantly underrepresented in the upper ranks, and only make up 27.9% of the entire force.[132] Although police work has changed a great deal over the last 100 years, the gendered nature of its role in British society has not kept pace. As a twentieth-century patrol correctly predicted, "The Policewoman's life demands a very great deal of those who undertake it, and few women would adopt it except as a real calling."[133]

Many historians have concluded that the British women's police movement sold women out by submitting to the patriarchal power in exchange for a modicum of authority. The evidence does not support that interpretation. On the contrary, women

---

[131] Ibid.

[132] Home Office: National Statistics, Police Workforce of England and Wales, March 31, 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2014/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2014.

[133] Notes of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene: Deputation to Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Scotland, 1929: Testimony of Miss Edith Tancred, on behalf of NCW of Great Britain. LSE: Box 076, 3AMS/B/12/01-04.

came together to protect each other from both male perpetrators and the male justice system. It could be argued that the women police perhaps lacked vision for any long-term goals for the overall improvement of women's lives. Instead, they focused on the quotidian practicalities of living in a system that legitimized sexual double standards in favor of men. To call this a model for women to avoid is to ignore the efficacy of the patrols in their work on the streets, as well as their success at penetrating one of the most male-dominated professions. The women involved in the police movement were feminists, but since social purity feminism fell out of favor in subsequent decades, historians have not acknowledged them as part of the women's rights movement, and by so doing, simplify the complexity of the women's movement during this time, which varied ideologically. Furthermore, women police were not a purely British anomaly, nor should their ostensible "betrayal" of feminism be regarded as such. Women in Cape Town seized on the idea and launched it with a degree of enthusiasm never before seen in any women's movement in the country. The similarities between the two experiments are striking, given the myriad of differences in setting, demographics, and cultural history of both groups. A study of the sister movement in Cape Town bolsters this conclusion, as the women involved in that movement were notoriously antisuffragette and had done very little to further women's rights by the time they petitioned to form a group of woman patrols. The heart and brains behind the Cape Town patrols was Margaret Sterling, a patrol who traveled from England to Cape Town to establish and lead the movement there. The Cape Town patrols were thus essentially an extension of the London patrols in everything but geography. The two experiences informed each other, and the insights gained from extending the analysis to incorporate the Cape Town

movement magnifies the extent to which women's policing formed a part of the social purity brand of feminism that remained a vital part of the women's rights movement well into the twentieth century. A transnational study of women's policing in London and Cape Town demonstrates the complex place women police occupied in debates over women's rights and roles at a crucial turning point for the early women's movement.

WOMEN POLICE IN CAPE TOWN

The Black Peril

Many women in Cape Town devoted thousands of hours of unpaid, unpleasant labor patrolling the streets of Cape Town for almost four years, and yet only one historian, Keith Shear, has written about them in any depth. In his 1996 article, Shear argued that the period between 1914-1918 offered a "distinct possibility" for the inclusion of women in the police, as it was a time of "unusual plasticity in South African state and policy formation, which created an opportunity for promoting competing conceptions of policing."[134] These competing conceptions of policing were based on the same model that women in London were advocating, and relied on the same essentialist ideas of gender. The anemic women's movement in Cape Town prior to the war, combined with the strong police movement starting in 1915, lends credence to the argument that the police movement there, as well as in London, never proclaimed to pursue feminist objectives in the traditional way, nor was it led by women grounded in the women's rights movement.

In the years leading up to the war, South African feminists chose a very different strategy from their British counterparts to further women's rights in their newly formed Union. South African press coverage of the English suffragettes was overwhelmingly

[134] Keith Shear. " 'Not Welfare or Uplift Work': White Women, Masculinity, and Policing in South Africa," *Gender & History*, 8:3 (1996): 393-415, accessed October 11, 2014, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0424.

negative, likely influencing the local budding women's movement in their choice to distance themselves from the group as much as possible. Their own campaign for the vote was a much more cautious affair, with the Women's Enfranchisement League not even organized until 1902. It is somewhat surprising that the physical and mental strength required from female settlers who chose to emigrate to a new and hostile geography did not translate into a more politically independent spirit. Emily Conybeare, an English suffragette and member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, was deeply frustrated with the "political apathy" of the women of South Africa. "[T]he women of this Colony ought to come forth from the selfish paradise in which many of them live and become more *womanly*…Liberty is duty, not license."[135] But as Cheryl Walker has pointed out, the political quagmires of South Africa in the years just prior to the 20th century were such that very little energy could be spared for women's causes.[136] Afrikaner women, for instance, likely submitted any political aspirations to the greater cause of nationalism under the constant threat of British rule, and there was certainly no question of pursuing the issue during either Boer War.[137] In 1910 came the delicate task of unifying all the provinces into one Union, and female enfranchisement was the least of people's worries under the larger burden of creating a new country.[138] The white, middle-class European women who devoted themselves to the cause were "energetic and capable women, restless for all the opportunities that society offered to their class but denied to their sex."[139] But these women also knew that to press too hard for the vote could

[135] Elizabeth van Heyningen, "The Social Evil in the Cape Colony, 1868-1902: Prostitution and the Contagious Diseases Acts," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 10 (1984): 189.
[136] Cheryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1982), 318.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid, 21.

provoke a backlash during a time when presenting a united white front to the indigenous populations was of paramount importance, especially given the voting status of black men: as part of its compromise to join the Union, Cape Town had wrangled an agreement from the rest of the provinces to leave in place their law allowing qualified black men to vote despite the fact that this would be inconsistent with the racially-exclusive laws in place in the rest of the Union. This proved to be a volatile issue in the years that followed, and even though women occasionally attempted to use this shameful "subversion of the proper racial hierarchy" to gain the vote, they never succeeded.[140] Another more pressing problem involving women around the country also detracted from their fight to obtain the vote. The number of professional prostitutes across the country had increased significantly with the flood of immigrants starting in the mid-1890s. By 1902, there were 150 brothels in Cape Town alone, and 500 of the 600 prostitutes were white, a significant increase from the years before the Boer War.[141] Registers in Cape Town from 1886, for example, showed 112 indigenous prostitutes compared to twenty-four English and nineteen Dutch.[142] Many had connections to international crime organizations, and South African police often found themselves baffled by a new, sophisticated brand of criminal underground activity.[143] Many feared that these European prostitutes were not nearly as discriminating as they should have been about the race of their clients. As a result, the Betting Houses, Gaming Houses and Brothels Suppression Act (the Morality Act) was passed in 1902, which, among other things, outlawed sexual relations between black men

[140] Walker, 324.
[141] Vivian Bickford-Smith, Nigel Worden, and Elizabeth van Heyningen, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: An Illustrated Social History* (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 1999), 36-39.
[142] Van Heyningen, *Social Evils*, 186.
[143] Ibid.

and white women, but not between white men and black women.[144] Because black men were seen as incapable of distinguishing between the different classes of white women, having sex with one white woman made them believe "that they need only make advances to be accepted by white women generally."[145] But the more pressing concern for those in power was the harm sexual relations between the white women and black men would do to the prestige of the race as a whole, making white rule much more difficult to maintain. This concern escalated into what became known as the "black peril," where fears of black men assaulting white women ran rampant, stoked by rumors and countless stories of attacks. A 1913 report, however, found that although assaults on white women had increased, they were "commensurate with the increase of crime generally."[146] (One wonders whether the Commission actually meant for this to be reassuring.) Statistics showed that only eight black men were convicted of raping white women in 1912.[147] Many more were accused, but lack of evidence forced their acquittals, which shows the degree of panic fueling the allegations.[148] It is also possible that some of the incidents may not have been rapes, but consensual sex that women could not admit to, given the law and racial regime.

It is clear that white men participated just as much in this hysteria as the women, if they were not the main source of its genesis. As historians Walker and Keegan point out, a variety of external sources were constantly threatening white masculinity at this

---

[144] Bickford-Smith, Worden, and van Heyningen, *Cape Town*, 39.
[145] "Report to the Commission appointed to enquire into assaults on women," *Cape Times*, June 3, 1913, 22.
[146] Commission, 10.
[147] Timothy Keegan. "Gender, Degeneration and Sexual Danger: Imagining Race and Class in South Africa, ca. 1912," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27:3 (2001): 459-477, accessed November 2, 2014, doi: 10.1080/13632430120074545.
10.1080/13632430120074545.
[148] Ibid.

time.[149] The Industrial Revolution robbed many men of their ability to provide for their family and forced them from agricultural communities to large cities where their personal and public autonomy was constantly belittled. This insecurity was exacerbated by the relatively small number of women available for men to marry. By 1914, there were still 50,000 more white men on the Rand than white women, making the competition for women "fierce."[150] Afrikaner men especially faced many of these debilitating dilemmas at the turn of the century as they moved to urban centers and struggled to find work against the seemingly inexhaustible supply of cheap black labor. They often found themselves forced to watch their wives and daughters go out to the streets to earn a living, which was a source of deep shame.[151]

As in Britain, efforts to curb the rise in prostitution and assaults were constantly thwarted by the men entrusted to do the job. A special contingent of policemen had been established to enforce the 1902 Morality Act, but the morality police, as they were called, were a spectacular failure. There were the more banal scandals like that of David Charteris, who was charged with fourteen incidents of receiving bribes from brothel owners.[152] Or there were the more horrific "outward manifestations"[153] of deeper corruption as in the Rosie Zeeman case. In 1904, two morality policemen stopped Rosie Zeeman while she was walking home from work.[154] They threw her into a cab, assaulted

[149] Keegan, 461; Walker, 302.
[150] Keegan, 317.
[151] Ibid.
[152] S.H. Rowson, "Cape Times" *Law Reports: A Record of Every Matter Disposed of in the Supreme Court of the Cape of Good Hope During the Year 1904*, Vo. XIV, *The Cape Times* LTD: Cape Town, 1905.
[153] Archives of the Secretary for Justice (JUS) - JUS Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16: Extract from year-end report, Colonel Gray, Dec. 31, 1915.
[154] Bickford-Smith, Worden, and van Heyningen, *Cape Town*, 40.

her, and then took her to the police station and accused her of soliciting.[155] Unable to speak English well enough to defend herself, Rosie was convicted before her family could find her.[156] An infuriated Jewish community demanded an investigation, and the morality police were found to be largely corrupt and in league with the very pimps and gambling houses they were supposed to be prosecuting.[157]

A 1913 government report recorded an ongoing distrust of the police ten years after this incident. Various cities attempted to use indigenous men as part of the police force, but that also proved problematic. The Commission reported that they tended to be "untrustworthy," unreliable, treated other Africans poorly, and stole from the mines they were hired to guard.[158] There was also an acknowledged "fear of molestation by the native police," presumably by white women.[159] With the outbreak of World War I and the convergence of troops in urban areas, prostitution and indecent behavior on the streets grew worse at the same time the number of policemen decreased.[160] The *Cape Times* called it "a time of unusual excitement…with a resultant want of self-control."[161] Thus, the women of Cape Town decided it was time to take matters into their own hands.

The Formation of Women Patrols

After contacting the headquarters in London, the Cape Town branch of the National Council of Women proposed the idea of women patrols to Cape Town Deputy Commissioner of Police, Colonel Gray, in early 1915. In March of the same year, Gray

---

[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.
[160] J.F. Solly, "A plea for women police," *South African Nation: the virile national weekly*, December 12, 1925.
[161] As cited in Bickford-Smith, Worden, and van Heyningen, *Cape Town*, 50.

wrote to Colonel Truter, secretary of the national police, and asked for authorization to bring several women onto the force "as an experiment."[162] "The present time is particularly opportune," he explained, "as owing to the large number of troops here, the amount of prostitution has increased, and contraventions of the morality laws generally have been augmented, and there is a large scope for good policewomen."[163] Gray assured Truter that the extra expenditure necessary had already been approved, and that, if necessary, he would dismiss two male foot constables in order to procure the women's services.[164] Not receiving a reply from the secretary for two months, Gray wrote again, impatient: "Is it possible, please, for me to be authorised to get a couple of police women for use in the Cape Peninsula….? The moral question…is becoming increasingly important every day."[165] He explained to Truter that the women would help guide and protect young girls they came across while patrolling the streets. Gray's proposal demonstrates that the same social purity mindset was at work in Cape Town – that women are better at protecting women than men, showing the distrust with which social purity activists viewed males. This distrust went further to strengthen their gender essentialist arguments, as they were eager to distinguish themselves from a group whose moral weakness made them a constant danger.

It is worth noting that in Britain, where feminists had been fighting for women's rights for decades, women had a much harder time convincing the men to allow them even a small niche in law enforcement. And yet, with so little experience in such movements, the women of Cape Town were almost immediately successful in convincing

[162] Archives of the South African Police (SAP) - SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 2A1: Letter from Colonel Gray to Golonel Truter, March 16, 1915.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.
[165] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 2A2: Letter from Colonel Gray to Colonel Truter, May 3, 1915.

Gray of their necessity to his profession. It is possible that Gray's openness to the idea was born more out of desperation than sympathy for any cause, as well as a less entrenched policing bureaucracy than in London. He told Truter that he had been looking for a new approach for some time, "as ordinary police action had failed to prevent or even control them [social evils] satisfactorily."[166] When the War broke and "the increased number of troops greatly increased these evils," he said in a year-end report, "the public demanded some action to be taken by those in authority."[167] Both groups' success at convincing the men to allow them to patrol the streets can be largely attributed to the war, and it seems likely that without the war as a catalyst and amplifier of social ills, women police would have had to wait for many more years to appear. But in South Africa, there was also a greater flexibility in part because, as a new country formed in 1910, there was a clear mandate for establishing new processes.

It is also notable that Gray included the police's failure to prevent these social evils as a reason for accepting the women. A failure implies the preexistence of a duty or expectation, and in this case, Gray seemed to believe that the public expected the police to prevent crime, not just punish it. In keeping with their separatist strategy demonstrated in other issues, the women patrols in Cape Town went out of their way to distinguish themselves as largely preventive agents, most likely in an effort to avoid raising the immediate objections that were sure to arise regarding feminine suitability for such a profession. Activist Julia Solly, in her "plea for women police," explained that such women "*should be in addition to and not instead of any* of the present Police Force which

[166] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 3B1: Letter from Colonel Gray to Colonel Truter, December 31, 1915.
[167] Ibid.

is inadequate even for its own work."[168] Women took what male scientists and clergymen had preached about them and created a space for their biological weakness to be transformed into a strength that could be used for their own ends. Inevitably, such a sexist mindset towards men led to equally derogatory comments about their capabilities. One advocate for women police claimed, for example, that because a policeman was male, he simply could not help being cruel to female suspects: "Not that the policeman was deliberately brutal; but…he partook of the inevitable attributes of mere man and was incorrigibly blind."[169]

By playing on the differences that men had insisted on to justify their own dominance, women obligated men to admit that they lacked those traits that women possessed, such as compassion, the ability to nurture, and a special connection to children; the true challenge would be to convince men that the enforcement of those laws they had made required traits that only women possessed. Those differences were no more strongly felt than in the enforcement of the Contagious Diseases Act, which was still valid in Cape Town, although other provinces had repealed it by the outbreak of the war. This is likely one of the reasons Cape Town women were so much more eager to become involved in law enforcement, since the CDA and the Morality Act created a seemingly irreconcilable conflict for police. The Morality Act prohibited prostitution while the CDC condoned it by requiring various regulations for its providers. Debate had been going on for several years before the war about which Act should receive

---

[168] Solly, 1.
[169] Janis Appier. "Preventive Justice: The Campaign for Women Police, 1910-1940," *Women & Criminal Justice*, 4:1 (1993): 3-36, accessed October 15, 2014, doi: 10.1300/J012v04n01_02.

precedence. The CDC remained in effect until 1919, when it was modified by The New Public Health Act, which still required compulsory treatment of infected prostitutes. Thus, just as women in Britain were forced to work within the confines of laws such as the Defense of the Realm Act, the women in Cape Town realized that the best way to counter the CDA was to make sure it was enforced by women, instead of the men who could so easily abuse it to the detriment of young girls. This concern was intensified by the racial climate in Cape Town, where racial fears automatically heightened the stakes on women's safety.

Unlike Colonel Gray, Colonel Truter was suspicious of the women's motives from the beginning. Although he gave Colonel Gray permission to take on women volunteers, he resisted calling them policewomen, and made sure to warn Gray from using the term in connection with their work.[170] At the time, Gray disregarded this last direction as a mere nuance, but it became a theme in almost all of Truter's subsequent correspondence on the topic. The government provided an office, postage, and 20 pounds a month for two women to direct the group.[171] Miss Margaret Sterling traveled to Cape Town from England to direct the efforts.[172] Little else is known about Sterling – who she was or why she was selected to head the Cape Town group. By June, there were thirty-one volunteers working the streets, and that number had increased to sixty-five by July.[173] The NCW created a board of seven women to oversee the work, with the wife of the Archbishop acting as chair.[174] All seven women were white, middle class, and wives of

[170] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 1B: Letter from Colonel Truter to Colonel Gray, May 11, 1915.
[171] Solly, 1.
[172] Sterling seems to have been involved with the women police volunteers in London, but not much more is known about her.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Solly, 2.

influential white men in the upper echelons of Cape Town society.[175] Each week, the women were assigned shifts that lasted somewhere between six to ten hours a day, followed by shorter assignments where they would patrol for two or three hours at night, this particular work being "very trying and often dangerous."[176] The volunteers would submit written reports of their encounters and the board would meet each week to discuss them. Those situations needing further action were taken over by Margaret Sterling and another woman, both of whom were paid.[177]

As in England, the patrols, once allowed to work, seemed to be successful and useful to their male supervisors, as demonstrated by the following excerpt from a report Gray sent to Truter in November 1916 summarizing the patrols' work over the past year:

> "It is difficult to state fully the work that is being done by these women as fresh uses for them are manifesting themselves as the work increases. These are their duties right now: 1) Active Street work, dealing with recognized prostitutes, looking after young girls and children found on the streets late at night, warning and befriending any girl who needs it; Parks, Railway Stations and other public places are visited. 2) Following up of cases found on the streets: interviewing parents and guardians, visiting girls in their homes."[178]

This list of responsibilities mirrored almost exactly the activities women patrols in Britain were carrying out. It shows the same assumptions regarding women's natural abilities and limitations – that they should work primarily with their own sex and children – and a transcontinental fear for and of adolescent females in their capacity to wreck their own and others' lives with their apparent fixation on immoral conduct. As in England, the women in Cape Town had no powers of arrest or detention, "but the police were

---

[175] Shear, 399.
[176] JUS Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16: Extract from year-end report, Colonel Gray, Dec. 31, 1915.
[177] Ibid.
[178] JUS Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16: Extract from year-end report, Colonel Gray, Dec. 31, 1915.

requested to assist them in every way."[179] The patrols' main goal was to find, help, and "save" the poor white girls who clogged the city streets and became prey to black men, either through choice or circumstance. They saw these white girls as targets of the most awful kind of fate, and most likely connected their own safety to that of these girls. Although race was not a significant concern in most areas of Britain at the time, anxiety in both countries still centered on the young female, who was seen as both a victim and a perpetrator. In London, they were the carriers and spreaders of venereal disease and cultural contamination; in Cape Town, their vulnerability to black men's advances threatened the supremacy of the white race. The tension that arose from the uniquely female power through weakness was exactly what the women patrols took advantage of. As in England, where the women realized that the source of their power came, in some respects, from their lack of it – in the form of arrest and "brute force" – Colonel Gray recognized that they held an advantage over the established male constables, for "police action can only legally intervene when the tree has borne its evil fruit, and then only to punish and not to prevent."[180]

Gray's comment on the legality of the patrols' work is revealing, for he seems to imply that what the women patrols were doing was not technically legal, or at least not within actual police authority. This also echoes the London reports, where women realized that, unincorporated, they actually had more autonomy and freedom to work with civilians than policemen did. Gray further emphasizes this when he explained to Truter that the women "deal almost entirely with moral questions… if they are very young white girls leading immoral lives – [they] have been dealt with by the Women Patrols, who are

[179] Solly, 1.
[180] JUS Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16: Extract from year-end report, Colonel Gray, Dec. 31, 1915.

better able to cope with this particular difficulty, as *they can watch the girls (unknown to them) when they are out on the streets, and no other workers do street work*."[181] This points to a crucial gender construct that acted in the women's favor initially, and that was their relative anonymity working in the capacity of unofficial agents. It was precisely because no one expected women to be exercising the type of authority needed to conduct undercover surveillance that the women were successful in doing it. But if they succeeded in obtaining full powers of arrest and pay like the men, it was very possible that the key to their effectiveness would vanish. The patrols' scrutiny was a form of discipline imposed by the state, and as all discipline is aimed at controlling the body, this surveillance also pierced the consciousness of its objects to create a "conscious and permanent visibility," so that, regardless of whether the women were watching or not, those objects of scrutiny internalized the surveillance, ensuring desirable behavior at all times.[182] As in London, where *The Times* discussed the distinct moral awareness that women seemed to produce in the streets, one could argue that the patrols' essentialist claims were actually grounded in an idea of psychological control, rather than physical, although it was the physical they were monitoring.[183] This produced Foucauldian "docile bodies," which was exactly what the women wanted to achieve: female bodies whose sexual expression conformed to normative goals and would eventually become self-regulating.

Gray's letter illuminates another sensitive issue that the patrols were challenging with their work. The public streets had long been off limits for respectable women, and to

---

[181] Ibid. (emphasis added)
[182] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 201.
[183] Ibid.

exercise any sort of control over a space specifically reserved for males or "loose women" was either a blatant encroachment into male territory or a loss of respectability and reputation. As in Britain, women in Cape Town used the moral authority their sex lent them, which made a significant difference in their effectiveness and right to be on the streets. As one patrol reported, "Women are able without using any authority, of dispersing the undesirable elements."[184] This woman lamented that no one else paid attention to the increasing number of young girls wandering the streets, alone and idle. This might seem harmless, she warned, but it made the streets more dangerous for everyone.[185] The patrols were able to warn these girls about the kind of attention they were attracting and keep them from bringing harm upon themselves and their families.[186] The streets consistently figured into the patrol's vision of success in dealing with the problem, implicitly rejecting the proposition often made by men that women go back to addressing vice through their own private charitable agencies.

The women patrols therefore presented an uncomfortable paradox. If, as men told them, they were morally superior to men, they must be better suited to keep the streets clear from vice, even though it was their very purity that men had used to keep them from the streets. Gray, at least, did not seem to mind that women could do what his men could not. In June 1916, he asked for money to employ two more women, and noted that the Magistrate, Clergy, and Naval Authorities had specifically requested the help of women in Simontown, "where social evils are very bad."[187] He deemed the experiment successful

[184] *Cape Argus*, September 24, 1917.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 5: Colonel Gray letter to Colonel Truter, June 14, 1916.

after less than a year, and sought to extend the work to other areas.[188] As Gray and others talked about expanding the women's work, Truter started to take notice. He repeatedly told Gray to stop using the word "police" to describe the women. The term was a "misnomer," he explained, because as the South African Police Act currently stood, no provision existed to allow women to be part of the police force.[189]

Truter was likely alarmed at the rising interest in the patrols, as several months earlier, he had received a letter from the mayor of Johannesburg asking about the movement. This was likely a result of a letter the deputy commissioner of the Johannesburg police, Colonel Douglas, had received earlier from the president of the Women's Reform Club, Theresa Lawrence.[190] She had written urging the employment of women patrols, as they would help with the observance of the morality laws and also do much to prevent the sale of illicit liquor.[191] The illicit liquor trade was a major thorn in the side of the Union government. It was considered responsible for 80% of the violent crimes committed among the indigenous population, as well as cited as a major contributing factor in the attacks against white women.[192] The sight of respectable white women participating in the illicit liquor trade was simultaneously disturbing and riveting to the public. *The Cape Times* capitalized on the sensationalism of the phenomenon in articles such as one titled, "Woman in Sable Furs Sentenced."[193] The article makes much of the woman's expensive furs at court and the tears she shed into her fine lace

---

[188] Ibid.
[189] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 8: Colonel Truter letter to Colonel Gray, November 16, 1916.
[190] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 9A: Letter from Theresa Lawrence to Colonel Douglas, April 2, 1916.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Commission, 15.
[193] *Cape Times*, "Woman in Sable Furs Sentenced," July 1, 1915.

handkerchief upon receiving her sentence.[194]

Seeing the success women patrols were having curbing prostitution in Cape Town, Theresa Lawrence saw them as a more effective means of controlling the problem. Nevertheless, the officials of Johannesburg were dubious of the proposal, and their skepticism is evident in the reply Truter sent to the mayor of Johannesburg in July 1916. He explained that there had been, "[A] great deal of misunderstanding" about the women; that they were not police agents but voluntary patrols "organized to work round the various Camps and to patrol those parts of Cape Town which are frequented by foolish and immoral women… It must be understood that the work is purely 'voluntary' and 'honorary', and that there is at present no question of enrolment of Women Police."[195]

Truter relied heavily on the Police Act as the main obstacle to employing women police permanently. According to Hester Carter, the chair of the patrols board, Margaret Sterling insisted that the women become an official part of the police with all the same powers accorded to policemen.[196] This is significant, given the women in Britain did not seriously start pushing for incorporation until after the war. Perhaps the women's initial success made Sterling think she had some leverage to bargain with. She maintained that without the "requisite protection and authority" the police would lend them, the work could not continue on a long term basis.[197] This could be an indication that things on the streets were not as smooth as the advocates made them out to be in official reports. It is almost certain that the patrols met with great resistance from some quarters, not least of

[194] Ibid.
[195] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 3A1: Colonel Truter letter to the mayor of Johannesburg, July 27, 1916.
[196] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 6A: Hester Carter letter to Minister de Wet, December 29, 1916.
[197] Ibid.

which being the policemen themselves.[198] Since these same policemen were there to lend aid and protection when needed, the women probably felt their dependence keenly.

There is also some indication that the women wanted police authority in order to enter homes where they suspected immoral behavior or child abuse was taking place. During a discussion in Parliament about the patrols in 1916, a speaker explained that though the patrols might not have the requisite cause to ask for a warrant, "they should be able to go there [to suspicious houses] and see if there was anything demanding their attention."[199] If granted, this would have been a sweeping power indeed, as well as an extraordinary broadening of the police state. Both this and the separate women's police department in England could very well have been ways women had devised to become involved in law enforcement while working within the narrow structures of the laws as they then existed, for no one knew when the vote would be granted, if ever, or if progress on women's rights would proceed just as slowly as it had before the war. Truter seems to have grasped the enormity of the women's demands when he wrote to the Minister of Justice, Nicolass de Wet, in December 1916.[200] He emphasized the lack of any legal authority for admitting the women to the police force without amending the Police Act, that it should be left up to the local municipalities whether they wanted to employ patrols for their own use, but that the women "should not be administered in any way by this

[198] JUS Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 10A: Letter from Colonel Truter to Colonel Trew, July 16, 1919. Trew was the new deputy commissioner in Cape Town and Truter sent him a letter, which, among other things, alluded to hostility arising from the patrols' first District Commandant, an Inspector Stuart, whom Truter eventually replaced to give the women "a fair chance." In a *Cape Times* article dated July 1, 1915, Lady Innes, a member of the patrol board, refers to the "many unkind things" that had been said about the women patrols.

[199] "Women Police – Interesting Debate in the Assembly," *Rand Daily Mail*, March 16, 1917.

[200] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33A 2 30 P1 15 1: Colonel Truter letter to Minister de Wet, January 9, 1917.

Department."[201] De Wet agreed with Truter's assessment and replied that he was not prepared to propose an amendment of the Act.[202] After Gray informed the board of de Wet's decision, Margaret Sterling immediately tenured her resignation.[203] De Wet soon started receiving letters from advocates asking that he reconsider the matter. He was clearly embarrassed by the situation, writing to Truter that he could "not understand why [Gray] gave notice of termination at the present stage, as he understood from Colonel Truter that an endeavor would be made to carry on the present arrangement, at any rate while the war lasts."[204] Consequently, Truter instructed Gray that he was to keep the paid patrols in place, at least until the end of the war. Even given the awkward misunderstanding, it is unclear why de Wet made the allowance for the patrols to continue, given his and Truter's many objections to them. The conditions of wartime could explain de Wet's willingness to allow the women to continue, given their relative lack of manpower on the home front.

However, both men's general aversion to women in the police force was confirmed in March 1917 when de Wet wrote to Truter informing him that a motion to consider hiring women police would go before Parliament in two weeks, and would Truter please provide him "privately" with "anything in the nature of ammunition against it"?[205] He also mentioned that many men had been asking him about the possibility of regaining their old positions as policemen after the war, a reference that surely was not lost on Truter. Truter was more than happy to oblige his superior in laying out multiple reasons against the patrols. He claimed that taking on women police would be tantamount

[201] Ibid.
[202] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 13A: Minister de Wet letter to Colonel Truter, December 6, 1916.
[203] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 11B: Colonel Gray letter to Colonel Truter, December 13, 1916.
[204] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 13B: Minister de Wet letter to Colonel Truter, January 3, 1917.
[205] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33A 2 30 P1 16 1: Minister de Wet letter to Colonel Truter, March 2, 1917.

to "suppressing immorality."[206] This was not the duty of police, he argued, as the law endowed them only with the authority to "control [crime] by taking action when outward manifestations occur."[207] Essentially Truter was arguing against women becoming police because policing morality was not the mandate of the police. However, he undermined his own argument later on by alluding to the special corps of police officers whose purpose was to control morality, arguing they had been very successful in coping with this type of problem. Besides contradicting his earlier stance on the police's lack of authority to suppress immorality, his positive assessment of the morality police's success is surely exaggerated, given the Commission Report several years earlier and Gray's complaints that the public insisted the police do something more to control the streets. Truter concludes by admitting that having women on the police force would "retard police activities" because of their inability to physically perform the duties of a policeman."[208]

Truter's last argument seems misplaced. Women had never advocated carrying out the ordinary duties of policemen. The whole premise of their inclusion was based on the very distinct and separate "female" duties they as women were qualified to do. Moreover, the last year and a half had demonstrated that they were fully capable of performing the duties they volunteered to do, and no record suggests that policemen were significantly burdened in any way by the women's "helplessness." It also seems highly unlikely, given the difference in class and education between the women patrols and policemen, that the women would "retard police activities" in any way. On the contrary, a report from the Select Committee shortly before the war reveals that the police

[206] SAP Vol 201 Ref 33A 2 30 P1 17 3: Colonel Truter letter to Minister de Wet, March 5, 1917.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid.

department was highly unsatisfied with the quality of male recruits for the force, finding that the recruits were "mentally inefficient, unsuitable & unfit," and were actually "mentally incompetent to grasp the instructions they receive[d]."[209] In contrast, the policewomen claimed that not one complaint had been filed against them, although the source of that information renders it automatically questionable. Nevertheless, although many police officers had plenty of negative things to say about the women, there are no actual complaints lodged against them similar to those against the men. The one exception occurred in 1918, when Sub-Inspector Colonel Miller wrote a scathing review of two women patrols who had failed to secure a conviction for two girls they'd brought in for soliciting.[210] According to Miller, the female patrols had quailed under cross examination and could not even offer the information they had gathered to make the initial report.[211] From this one incident, Miller concluded that all women were "quite useless for carrying on Police work" and that the whole group had "entirely failed in their purpose."[212] Even taking Miller at his word, it seems a rather extreme overreaction to call the whole movement a failure because two women who had never been in court before had failed to perform up to an experienced policeman's standards during trial. The tolerance of male failure at police work compared to women's failure, even in the face of no training for the women as opposed to months of official supervision for men, points to the existence of ulterior motives in the police corps that were not based on performance or need.

Nevertheless, de Wet took Truter's arguments to Parliament two weeks later and

[209] JUS Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 6B: Letter from National Council of Women to the Minister of Defense, May 27, 1918.
[210] JUS Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 9A: Letter from Colonel Miller to Colonel Truter, July 11, 1919.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid.

used them to great effect. He claimed that under this idea of "moral reclamation," the police would soon find themselves being forced to hold daily prayers with the criminals. (This achieved a good deal of appreciative laughter from the all-male audience.)[213] He emphasized that what the women were doing was social work and they were free to approach private agencies or charitable organizations designed to handle these types of cases, but they simply did not belong in the police force.[214]

Those arguing in favor of the patrols pointed to the enormous amount of social work that the rapid growth of modern times demanded, which "neither the home nor charitable institutions were quite capable of coping with."[215] Parliament had recognized this very fact by passing other laws that interfered "in a very considerable way with the duties of parents towards their children and interfering in the home life of the people."[216] The Child Protection Act, which allowed for workers to remove white children under the age of 16 from their homes if their parents were found to be living in a manner conducive to corruption, justified and even demanded the employment of women police, the speaker argued.[217] Without the authority to enter homes to inspect conditions, the law had no teeth.[218] Since 1889, British social workers could enter the home if accompanied by a policeman. But opponents countered that police work would never appeal to the higher class of women needed to carry out that kind of work. This speaks to the gendered construction of the profession, as the class of men hired to protect the population were often of the lowest, including the black men that the white men claimed had an incurable

[213] "Women Police – Interesting Debate in the Assembly," *Rand Daily Mail*, March 16, 1917.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.

lust for white women. So to demand that women police be of the highest class implied that lower class women were automatically morally suspect, which was the main "crime" for which they would be regulated. This lack of respectable middle-class women would force the police to pick from the "ranks of uneducated young girls, fussy old maids and broken-down old crocks."[219] De Wet remarked that South Africa would never provide the quality of woman for the job as England did.[220] Although there is no direct information about the social status of the actual volunteers, it seems very unlikely that women who spent three years devoting hundreds of hours doing unpleasant work without remuneration were from the working class. The board alone was made up of the wife of the Archbishop, Lady Innes, wife of the Chief Justice, president of the WCTU, and the Mayoress. Lady Buxton, the Governor-General's wife, was also an active and avid supporter.[221] But knowing his audience as he surely did, de Wet correctly anticipated that accuracy was not the most effective way of persuasion. The motion was summarily dismissed after members complained that women just wanted to get paid for charity work and that the whole discussion was a waste of time.[222]

Money was an easy problem to which many frequently resorted in their arguments against women police. The issue came up repeatedly, both in Parliament and in Truter's correspondence, where he regularly instructed Gray that he should be absolutely sure that the women's "time is fully occupied and the state get all adequate return for the money spent."[223] Since only two of the women received any remuneration, it seems more likely that this was merely a ruse to keep the women from encroaching further into the force,

[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Shear, 399.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.

especially given the well-known understaffing of the police force. The 1913 Commission made explicit reference to this problem, and, while acknowledging that police could not be everywhere at once, still, "the Commission cannot help feeling that at this point the police provision is inadequate."[224] Advocates in both countries argued that the preventive nature of women police work saved money. Keeping crime from occurring in the first place decreased the need for prisons, workhouses, and hospitals, and the Women's Freedom League calculated that with every crime a policewoman prevented, the state saved 30-40 pounds.[225] The women's insistence on their inability to replace men was certainly a drawback in this regard, for such an argument naturally necessitated additional funding, as opposed to merely replacing male officers which would likely have decreased expenditures, as female labor has always come cheaper. But the success of such an approach at that time was, as the women surely knew, virtually impossible.

The Patrols Dissolve

Margaret Sterling returned to England as soon as the war ended in 1918. The rest of the volunteers attempted to continue, but the work floundered without her leadership and without the context of a society gripped by wartime anxieties about social order. Cape Town withdrew its funding by the end of 1919.[226] Activists tried repeatedly throughout the next several years to revive the movement, but public opinion had turned against them. Sensing their demise, a group of women petitioned de Wet in March 1919 for an extension of the program. Instead, he expressed concerns about the danger they faced in the streets. No record indicates any prior discussion or concern about the

[224] Commission, 29
[225] "Women Police," *Women's Freedom League*, Minerva Publishing Company, 1921. p. 4. LSE: Box 12, 7AMP/F/09/03.
[226] Solly, 2.

women's safety, and it seems odd that de Wet would make a special effort to keep the patrols employed through the duration of the war if he had had any real concerns about the dangerous conditions. The women protested that they had several times been in the most dangerous districts and had never been harmed. The minister merely replied that he was "pleasantly surprised to hear this," and again refused to amend the Police Act. He suggested instead that they offer their services to individual municipalities.[227] In July 1919, Truter used Colonel Miller's negative report of the patrols' performance in court to cut off all government funding for the remaining patrols. He said that Cape Town was welcome to continue paying for the women, but the state would no longer fund any patrol activity.[228] In desperation, thirteen women approached their old ally, Colonel Gray, in December 1919. Gray had since been transferred to Johannesburg, and the women asked for "the appointment of plain clothes women to do detective work in regard to immorality."[229] Gray expressed sympathy with the women's cause, but claimed to have no power to appoint them. He promised to present the proposition to the minister of justice, but his zeal for the movement seemed to have waned, and no further help came from his quarter. The Society for the Protection of Child Life, a group dedicated to bringing the plight of street children into the public eye, tried to petition for the reinstatement of patrols in Cape Town, but the new deputy commissioner, Colonel H.G. Trew, sent to Truter the three reasons he believed the patrols had failed, implying that he must have been involved somehow, perhaps as a fellow officer, at the time: 1) They were too old and were not under proper control; 2) they had no legal powers to act; 3) the work they were supposed to be employed on, patrolling the streets and controlling hardened

[227] JUS Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 4A: Memorandum of Deputation to the Minister of Justice, March 4, 1918.
[228] JUS Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 7C: Report on Deputation to Colonel Gray, Marcy 20, 1919.
[229] JUS Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 7C: Report on Deputation to Colonel Gray, March 20, 1919.

prostitutes, was not suitable work for women police.[230]

Just in case Truter did reconsider, Trew recommended that the women be ages 25-35, unmarried, from the highest social class, receive three to four months of training, have uniforms, and be legally appointed under an act of parliament.[231] Usually, one would assume that young women would be more out of control than mature adults. Trew's requirement to decrease the women's ages suggests that older women were just a little too unwilling to follow the direction of their male leaders. This was in direct opposition to the standards evolving in England and the rest of the world for the type of women they were trying to recruit for the work. Opinion was almost unanimous that a woman under the age of 25 or 27 would be undesirable for the work, and many preferred married women because of their more extensive experience of life. Unmarried women might very well be seen as more vulnerable to succumbing to the immoral practices they encountered in the streets compared to married women who were already secure in their sexual and familial obligations. The requirement also calls to mind the discussion in Parliament where men lamented the fact that only old maids would be available for the work, perhaps implying a concern over such women's ignorance of sexual matters that would keep them from succeeding in the field. It is possible that Trew expected unmarried women to be more malleable to policemen supervision, especially since his problem with the age of the former patrols revolved around their ostensible intractability.

The women police in Cape Town showed much more energy for this cause than any other in the first part of the twentieth century. But of the sixteen countries that used women in the police force during this time, South Africa was the only country to get rid

[230] JUS Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 11B: Colonel Trew letter to Colonel Truter, December 4, 1920.
[231] Ibid.

of them entirely after the war. They claimed that the situation in South Africa was not conducive to women police and that it was too dangerous for women to be on the streets, even though reports from Gray and others had previously shown that the presence of women significantly helped address those dangers. It is debatable whether, if the women patrols had succeeded in persuading the police force to accept them, they would have made a greater impact on the way the police force was run in subsequent years. Women in South Africa were given positions on the police force to deal with cases involving women and children in the early 1970s, but in the subsequent decades of apartheid unrest and violence, the same issues persisted. In 2012, more than a dozen members of the South African police department in the Western Cape were arrested on charges of rape,[232] and two police officers in Durban were charged for buying sex from a 12-year-old female prostitute.[233] With these numbers, it is no wonder that many have come to believe that women will always be vulnerable "while the 'wolf guards the sheep.'"[234] With this in mind, South Africa has for the first time appointed a woman as the national police chief in the hopes of "overcoming the scourge of gender-based violence."[235]

---

[232] "A look behind the statistics of South Africa's rape epidemic," *IRIN Global*, November 1, 2013, accessed December 3, 2014, http://www.irinnews.org/report/99039/a-look-behind-the-statistics-of-south-africa-s-rape-epidemic.

[233] "Durban cops bought sex from underage prostitute," News24, June 20, 2014, accessed December 3, 2014, http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Durban-cops-bought-sex-from-underage-prostitute-20140610.

[234] Erin Conway-Smith, "South African Police Officers Detain Women to Rape Them: Report," *NBC News*, January 30, 2015, accessed April 20, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/south-african-police-officers-detain-women-rape-them-report-n296667.

[235] David Smith, "South Africa's corruption-tainted police force gets first female chief," *The Guardian*, June 13, 2012, accessed April 16, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/13/south-africa-police-female-chief.

CONCLUSION

After a hundred years of trial and error, it seems that perhaps the women patrols were prescient when they proclaimed in a June 1915 meeting that, "It was ludicrous to expect a constable in blue to safeguard women in the streets."[236] Professional policing has consistently resisted the inclusion of women since its inception, and still today remains one of the most male dominated of any field. A 2006 study found that even though police forces need at least a 35% female ratio to "promote adequate progression and cultural integration,"[237] no country in the world has sustained above a 30% ratio, and most do well to maintain barely a quarter.[238] This is particularly striking given the success of the few women who have entered police work. Research in the 1970s and 80s not only found that the public was in favor of women police, but that women performed as well as men in most police duties and were overall more successful at "diffusing conflict."[239]

Historians' most common objection against situating the women police as part of a larger feminist movement was their willingness to enforce discriminatory laws against other women. Although this certainly occurred, sources demonstrate that their work in this area actually helped facilitate the repeal of some of those laws, such as the curfew in Grantham. Sources also reveal that allowing women to enforce sex-based laws helped prevent young women from having to suffer through the criminal justice process, which

---

[236] "Women Patrols," *Cape Times*, July 1, 1915.
[237] Tim Prenzler and Georgina Sinclair, "The Status of Women Police Officers: An International Review," *International Journal of Law, Crime, and Justice,* 41 (2013): 2.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid.

was deeply biased against female innocence in sexual abuse claims. Finally, although class power certainly played a part in both the objectives and the motives of the women, sources indicate that by the end of the war, at least half of the recruits were pulled from the lower classes, which directly refutes the arguments of those historians who claim that class control was the main impetus for the movements.

The women police movement was not founded on the brand of tenacious dogma that characterized the suffragist movement, but their different approach should not discount their effectiveness, nor does it automatically relegate them to the category of traitor to the women's cause. Although they did rely on essentialist arguments to make their way into the police force, they fell far short of subjecting themselves to male authority; on the contrary, they reveled in their superior "female" abilities, and authorities in both Britain and Cape Town acknowledged that the women had more scope and autonomy in their work than policemen did, both because of their unofficial status and because of their sex. These women knew how unjust the laws were, and although they did not change the laws, they did help many girls and women escape their deleterious effects, a feat that the suffragists had not come close to achieving in all their years of activism.

It also reveals the degree to which police work was connected to the early twentieth-century view of masculinity. One of the most common arguments opposing women police in both countries came from men who claimed that women's bodies lacked the strength to perform basic police duties, revealing that the underpinnings of police work mirrored that of the male patriarch and protector of the home. Many men argued that the women were not true police, despite strong evidence that women police were

rarely threatened, and were often more effective in preventing the conditions that caused crimes to begin with. But where would such soft-handed methods leave men? How was a man to feel any sense of worth in his masculinity if women did not need him to protect them from men worse than himself? That these questions pervaded debates in both countries demonstrates its centrality to the women's movement as a whole, and again shows that, contrary to arguments put forth by opponents in South Africa, the situation there was not so different as to make all comparison with England irrelevant. Nowhere is this demonstrated more clearly than in Cape Town's "black peril," where the white community convinced itself that all indigenous men were biologically predisposed to rape white women. As Timothy Keagan argues, if women believed that all black men wanted to rape them, they would be much more likely to accept laws that controlled their own sexuality in the name of protection, thereby solidifying women's dependence on men.[240] Stoking hysteria of the indigenous male predator simultaneously inflated the necessity of the male protector, thus "reduc[ing] women to objects of desire that had to be cosseted and confined." [241] Instead, the women patrols and police of London and Cape Town presented a strong argument for the protection of women by women, rejecting the tradition of complete reliance on the sex that also posed the biggest threat. This also allowed women to evolve from a state of chronic victimhood to one of active agency in their own well-being. At the very least, the women police in London and Cape Town opened the door to having women in law enforcement, even if they only managed to claim a small room inside. Although women are still underrepresented in both forces today, these first women were responsible for that first, crucial step that shifted the

[240] Keegan, 474-75.
[241] Ibid.

public's mindset just enough to make them reevaluate how female power could be used in concert with men's in the public sphere. This was more than suffragists had been able to accomplish in twice as much time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archival Sources

Archives of the Secretary for Justice, Cape Town (JUS) - Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16: Extract from year-end report, Colonel Gray, December 31, 1915.

Archives of the Secretary for Justice, Cape Town (JUS) - Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 10A: Letter from Colonel Truter to Colonel Trew, July 16, 1919.

Archives of the Secretary for Justice, Cape Town (JUS) - Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 6B: Letter from National Council of Women to the Minister of Defense, May 27, 1918.

Archives of the Secretary for Justice, Cape Town (JUS) - Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 9A: Letter from Colonel Miller to Colonel Truter, July 11, 1919.

Archives of the Secretary for Justice, Cape Town (JUS) - Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 4A: Memorandum of Deputation to the Minister of Justice, March 4, 1918.

Archives of the Secretary for Justice, Cape Town (JUS) - Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 7C: Report on Deputation to Colonel Gray, Marcy 20, 1919.

Archives of the Secretary for Justice, Cape Town (JUS) -Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 7C: Report on Deputation to Colonel Gray, March 20, 1919.

Archives of the Secretary for Justice, Cape Town (JUS) - Vol 419 Ref 1 57 16 No 11B: Colonel Trew letter to Colonel Truter, December 4, 1920.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 2A1: Letter from Colonel Gray to Colonel Truter, March 16, 1915.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 2A2: Letter from Colonel Gray to Colonel Truter, May 3, 1915.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 1B: Letter from Colonel Truter to Colonel Gray, May 11, 1915.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 5: Colonel Gray letter to Colonel Truter, June 14, 1916. Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 8: Colonel Truter letter to Colonel Gray, November 16, 1916.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 9A: Letter from Theresa Lawrence to Colonel Douglas, April 2, 1916.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 6A: Hester Carter letter to Minister de Wet, December 29, 1916.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33A 2 30 P1 15 1: Colonel Truter letter to Minister de Wet, January 9, 1917.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) -Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 13A: Minister de Wet letter to Colonel Truter, December 6, 1916.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 11B: Colonel Gray letter to Colonel Truter, December 13, 1916.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33 2 30 P1 13B: Minister de Wet letter to Colonel Truter, January 3, 1917.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33A 2 30 P1 16 1: Minister de Wet letter to Colonel Truter, March 2, 1917.

Archives of the South African Police, Pretoria (SAP) - Vol 201 Ref 33A 2 30 P1 17 3: Colonel Truter letter to Minister de Wet, March 5, 1917.

Bristol Training School for Women Patrols and Police: Annual Report for the year ending 31st August, 1918. London School of Economics, Women's Library: GB 106 AMS/4/10/3.

Home Office Circular No. 96/1944: "Policewomen." March 30, 1944, London School of Economics, Women's Library: Box 4, 3/AMS/B/12/04.

League of Nations, Traffic in Women and Children Committee: The Employment of Women in the Police. March 2, 1927: Geneva. Speech submitted by Madame Avril de Sainte Croix. p. 3. London School of Economics, Women's Library: NVA Box 4, FL380.

Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Miss D.O.G. Peto, OBE, Mrs. R. Young, and Miss Joseph on behalf of the Bristol Branch Federated Training Schools for Policewomen and Patrols, March 7, 1920, p. 25-35. London School of Economics, Women's Library: 3AMS/B/12/04.

Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, 1921: Testimony of General Sir Nevil Macready, March 4, 1920, 10-16. London School of Economics, Women's Library: 3AMS/B/12/04.

Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Lady Nott-Bower, March 8, 1920, London School of Economics, Women's Library: 3AMS/B/12/04, 42-46.

Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Miss H.M. Kempthorne, March 7, 1920, p. 35-38. London School of Economics, Women's Library: 3AMS/B/12/04.

Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ. 1921: Testimony of Margaret Damer Dawson and Mary Allen, March 5, 1920, 25-35. London School of Economics, Women's Library: 3AMS/B/12/04.

Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Miss M.H. Cowlin, director of the Liverpool and District Women Patrols' Centre and Training School for Women Police. March 7, 1920, p. 40-43. London School of Economics, Women's Library: 3AMS/B/12/04.

Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Mr. Frederick Mead, Metropolitan Police Magistrate. March 8, 1920, p. 44-48. LSE: 3AMS/B/12/04.

Minutes of Evidence: Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties, Publ.1921: Testimony of Mr. William Clarke Hall, Metropolitan Magistrate, March 7, 1920, p. 56-66. London School of Economics, Women's Library: 3AMS/B/12/04.

National Council of Women, *Women Police in Great Britain: England* (High Wycombe: Harrison & Sons, 1924), London School of Economics, Women's Library: GB 106 AMS/B/12.

Notes of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene: Deputation to Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Scotland, 1929: Testimony of Miss Edith Tancred, on behalf of NCW of Great Britain. London School of Economics, Women's Library: Box 076, 3AMS/B/12/01-04.

"Personal experience of woman in Bow Street Police Station," Employment of Women Police I 1885-1925, Box 76 Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, London School of Economics, Women's Library: 3AMS/B/12/01.

"Why We Should Not Advocate Severe Measures for the Punishment of Street Solicitation," Katharine C. Bushnell, M.D. (1919). London School of Economics, Women's Library: Box 122, 3AMS/D/41.

"Women Police," *Women's Freedom League*, Minerva Publishing Company, 1921. p. 4. London School of Economics, Women's Library: Box 12, 7AMP/F/09/03.

Other Primary Sources

A.A.B., "More Male Police Wanted. Not Enough Detectives," *The Evening Star*. Dec 14, 1925.
Butler, J. *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade*, (London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1896).

Home Office: National Statistics, Police Workforce of England and Wales, March 31, 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2014/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2014.

Solly, J.F. "A plea for women police," *South African Nation: the virile national weekly*, December 12, 1925.

Stead, W.T. "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon, I-III," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, July 6-10, 1885.

"The Eliza Armstrong Case: Being a Verbatim Report of the Proceedings at Bow Street," *Pall Mall Gazette Supplement*, Oct. 3, 1885, http://www.attackingthedevil.co.uk/pmg/tribute/armstrong/bow/bow1.php.

"Unobtrusive Good Work," *The London Times*, April 17, 1917.

"Woman in Sable Furs Sentenced," *Cape Times*, July 1, 1915.

"Women Patrols," *Cape Times*, July 1, 1915.

"Women Police – Interesting Debate in the Assembly," *Rand Daily Mail*, March 16, 1917.

Secondary Sources

"A look behind the statistics of South Africa's rape epidemic," *IRIN Global*, November 1, 2013, accessed December 3, 2014, http://www.irinnews.org/report/99039/a-look-behind-the-statistics-of-south-africa-s-rape-epidemic.

Appier, Janis. "Preventive Justice: The Campaign for Women Police, 1910-1940," *Women & Criminal Justice*, 4:1 (1993): 3-36, accessed October 15, 2014, doi: 10.1300/J012v04n01_02.

Bartley, Paula. *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England 1860-1914*, (London: Routledge, 1999).

Vivian Bickford-Smith, Nigel Worden, and Elizabeth van Heyningen, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: an Illustrated Social History* (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 1999).

Bland, Lucy. *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism & Sexual Morality, 1885-1914,* (New York: Penguin Group, 1995).

Blease, Walter Lyon. *The Emancipation of English Women*, (London: Constable & Co., 1913).

Sven Beckert in C.A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol and Patricia Seed, "*AHR* Conversation: On Transnational History," *The American Historical Review*, 111:5 (2006): 1441-1464, accessed February 19, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10/1086/ahr.111.5.1441.

Carrier, John. *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers*, (London: Ashgate, 1988).

Conley, Carolyn. *The Unwritten Law: Criminal Justice in Victorian Kent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Conway-Smith, Erin. "South African Police Officers Detain Women to Rape Them: Report," *NBC News*, accessed January 30, 2015, http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/south-african-police-officers-detain-women-rape-them-report-n296667.

"Durban cops bought sex from underage prostitute," News24, June 20, 2014, accessed December 3, 2014, http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Durban-cops-bought-sex-from-underage-prostitute-20140610.

Fenwick, Gillian. *The Literary Encyclopedia*, 1, "National Vigilance Association – banning of Zola's novels," The Literary Encyclopedia, February 2008, http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=5481

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

Heidensohn, Frances. *Women in Control?: Role of Women in Law Enforcement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

Jackson, Louise A. "Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969," *The Historical Journal*, 46:3 (2003): 623-648, accessed February 8, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3133565.

Jeffreys, Sheila. *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930,* (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1985).

Keegan, Timothy. "Gender, Degeneration and Sexual Danger: Imagining Race and Class in South Africa, ca. 1912," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27:3 (2001): 459-477, accessed November 2, 2014, doi: 10.1080/13632430120074545.

Kent, Susan. "The Demise of British Feminism," in *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Harold Smith (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990).

Langland, Elizabeth. *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, (Cornell University Press, 1995).

Levine, Philippa. " 'Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should': Women Police in World War I," *The Journal of Modern History*, 66:1 (1994): 44-78, accessed February 3, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2124391.

Lock, Joan. *The British Policewoman: Her Story*, (London: R. Hale, 1979).

Prenzler, Tim and Sinclair, Georgina. "The status of women police officers: An international review," *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 41:2 (2013): 115-131, accessed July 7, 2015, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcj.2012.12.001.

Radford, Jill; Hanmer, Jalma; and Stanko, Elizabeth. *Women, Policing, and Male Violence: International Perspectives*, (London: Routledge, 1989).

Rowson, S.H. "Cape Times" *Law Reports: A Record of Every Matter Disposed of in the Supreme Court of the Cape of Good Hope During the Year 1904*, Vo. XIV, Cape Times LTD: Cape Town, 1905.

Shear, Keith. " 'Not Welfare or Uplift Work': White Women, Masculinity, and Policing in South Africa," *Gender & History*, 8:3 (1996): 393-415, accessed October 11, 2014, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0424.

Smith, David. "South Africa's corruption-tainted police force gets first female chief," *The Guardian*, June 13, 2012, accessed April 16, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/13/south-africa-police-female-chief.

Travis, Alan. "First female PC wins Theresa May's acclaim and apology," *The Guardian*, December 1, 2015, accessed February 14, 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/dec/02/first-female-pc-wins-theresa-mays-acclaim-and-apology.

Twells, Alison. "A Christian and Civilised Land': The British Middle Class and the Civilising Mission, 1820-42," in *Gender, Civic Culture & Consumerism*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

Van Heyningen, Elizabeth. "The Social Evil in the Cape Colony, 1868-1902: Prostitution and the Contagious Diseases Acts," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 10 (1984).

Walker, Cheryl. *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1982).

Walkowitz, Judith R. *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London,* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Walkowitz, Judith R. *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State (*Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Woollacott, Angela. " 'Khaki Fever' and its Control: Gender, Class, Age and sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29:2 (1994): 325-347, accessed March 1, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/260893.

Woollacott, Angela. *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (University of California Press, 1994).